



The Holy See

*Message of His Holiness Paul VI
to Mr. Rend Maheu,
Director-General of UNESCO, to mark the closing
of the International Year of Education**

We have often had occasion to inform you of our great regard for UNESCO's Work for Education, Science and Culture.

The Holy See welcomed the happy idea of an International Education Year with pleasure. and Catholics on their part, intend to collaborate generously in the grand designs of this campaign. convinced that all educational work induces development and is a fount of peace between men and nations.

On this occasion, the Holy See considers it opportune to stress some of the major aspects of this subject, and We hope to please you by acquainting you with them, our only concern being to make a useful contribution to this great cause.

Our heartfelt desire is to see UNESCO, faithful to its noble aims, extend its peaceful activities for human development, which is of prime importance for the future of the world.

8 December 1970

PAUL VI

NOTE OF THE HOLY SEE

I

1. All men and all nations have always been concerned with the transmission of life, the means of existence and ways of living to succeeding generations. Moreover, in various ways according to place and time, education has always been considered as a work of primary importance, one which assures the transmission of knowledge and behaviour, and which tends to make man more humane by having him share all those things in nature and in history which can enrich his life ... and to use the forces of the physical world as instruments for his freedom (cf. J. Maritain, *L'humanisme intégral*, Paris, Aubier, 1936, p. 10-11).

2. This primordial task is being fulfilled today in thousands of ways, among ancient peoples and in young nations. But the profound changes that disturb our times render communication between generations more difficult. Furthermore, communication requires a continuous formation which is intended to help adults bring their knowledge up to date and profit by the progress made in knowledge and in techniques for their daily life as well as their professional activity.

3. While inequalities between the rich and the poor increase in a world narrowed down by modern means of social communication, the imbalance becomes more pronounced in the presence of "overdeveloped means and underdeveloped ends" (Paul VI, *Address to the International Seminar of Catholic European Periodicals and the African Society of Culture, L'Osservatore Romano*, 2 October 1969). Humanity hesitates, uncertain before fear and hope, in confused consciousness that a brilliant material and technical success can be on a par with a sort of moral failure (cf. Paul VI, *Address to the FAO*, 16 November 1970, n. 4, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17 November 1970), and that adults often seem frustrated when faced with the anxious and impatient expectation of youth. "Who has not sensed, in rich countries, their anxiety at the invasion of technocracy, their rejection of a society which has not succeeded in integrating them into itself; and, in poor countries, their lament that, for lack of sufficient training and fitting means, they cannot make their generous contribution to the tasks which call for it?" (Paul VI, *Address to the ILO In Geneva*, 10 June 1969, n. 23, in AAS, 61 [1969], p. 502).

UNESCO AND THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF EDUCATION

4. "Hunger for education is no less depressing than hunger for food." (Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, 26 March 1967, n. 35). The UNESCO, established by the Organization of the United Nations as an agency for specialization in education, science and culture, has given rise to legitimate hopes. The Church, on her part, has never ceased to collaborate with this deserving institution and will continue to do so, particularly during this international year of education. Thus, for example, in the more traditional forms of teaching which harmonize closely with the programmes of the civil authorities to whom it is fitting to render homage, we have seen in young

Christian nations the development of functional reading and writing, and the use of modern means of social communication for larger sectors of rural populations. Moreover, technical progress continues to be made in this field, and will make possible in the future what still seemed impracticable in the past. Who does not see, for example, the boundless possibilities offered to educators by satellite transmissions and film recorders?

5. This shows that present scientific and technical changes and their repercussions on daily life call for the constant study of methods of education always better adapted to the changing needs of a world in perpetual evolution. Knowledge is no longer something acquired once and for all. The amount of available information constantly increases, while methods and techniques continually change. The student of today knows that in the future he will be faced with innovations, the emergence of which his teachers hardly suspect. In addition to the necessary transmission of knowledge, educators must use all possible means to develop the faculties of judgment and discernment, and give to those concerned the desire and the means to pursue their own education by themselves later on. In short, learn to learn.

6. In this hour so important for the future of mankind, the Church on her part, in her own way and without ever losing sight of her purpose which is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ the Saviour, (cf. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, n. 1 and 8) intends to pursue her task as "mother and teacher" in countries where she has taken roots since her very beginnings. This is a requirement of "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). Eager to help young people and adults, not only for the needs of their physical and intellectual life, but also for those of their moral and spiritual life, "her missionaries have built, not only Churches, but also hostels and hospitals, schools and universities" (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n. 12). Moreover, far from restricting herself to educational establishments, the Church has founded numerous communities of education – let it suffice to recall the works of Don Bosco, Cardinal Cardijn and Saint John Baptist de La Salle – works destined to help young people develop their personality by integrating themselves freely in social life.

7. This educational effort, which has varied throughout the ages and history, has been applied particularly on behalf of the poor of all categories, and today in a special way to the physically and mentally handicapped and maladjusted. Numerous educators - religious men and women in the first place - have largely contributed, on their part and in many countries, to the advancement of the least favoured, and notably of women. In thousands of ways the educational task of the Church which continues all over the world where she contributes "to the authentic development, a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human" (ibid. n. 20). By so doing, as Pope Paul VI stated at the close of the recent ecumenical Council in Rome, the Church has but one aim: "to serve man" (AAS, 58[1966], pp. 55-59).

8. If it is true, according to the famous saying of an eminent philosopher, "that a developed body

requires the supplement of a soul, and that the mechanical would require the mystical" (H. Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, Paris, Alcan, 17th ed., 1934, p. 335), the Church believes that her contribution to education, in its specific aspects can help the men of our times realize to the full their most noble aspirations: to build a fraternal world wherein all the members of the great human family, from the youngest to the oldest, working with enthusiasm to realize this project so worthy of giving renewed life to their energies, will gradually succeed in trolling the forces of nature, in developing harmoniously the possibilities of education, and, respecting legitimate diversities, will promote a world civilization wherein all men can live as free and responsible persons, according to the image of the God of love who is their father.

II. COMPLETE HUMANISM AND INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT

9. "What must be aimed at is complete humanism. And what is that if not the integral development of the whole man and of all men? ... There is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning.. Man can only realize himself by reaching beyond himself." These statements of the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (n. 14) indicate clearly the fundamental objectives of the Church's activity in education. The Church is anxious to respect the balance between nature and grace, to help men recognize that they are brothers in a humanity advancing towards its full development.

10. "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). This recommendation of the Apostle Paul engages Christians in a zealous search for the truth. Far from leading them astray, faith stimulates their search in every field. They discover the multiform activity of man in the continued activity of the Creator. The Creator is not an embarrassing rival of his creature, since the scientific and technical achievements of the creature are accomplished in conformity with the designs of the Creator (cf Gen. 1:8). Is not the increasing ascendancy of man over the forces of nature in direct line with his vocation, similar to the control of the economy and the political adjustment of society? Is it not one of the primordial tasks of education to spread this creative enthusiasm, to share "the patrimony of civilization won by immense sacrifice," (Paul VI, *Christmas Message of 1968*, in AAS 61[1968], p. 56) and in this way, open wide the avenues of the future?

11. Such a discovery of educational manifestations and technical progress, which have characterized the life of man, opens the mind, enriches the heart, leads to respect and thoughtful admiration, and becomes the school of responsible freedom. In this process towards the conquest of truth, the personality of the educator is irreplaceable, for his task is no longer only a matter of transmitting knowledge, but of communicating values and discovering truth - an unlimited field whose gradual conquest broadens the mind and develops the person in search of perfection.

YOUTH IN QUEST OF TRUTH

12. This rising generation in quest of truth, athirst for authenticity and distrustful of all authority.

often rebellious to lessons of the past, especially the recent past - does not this generation seek knowledge that teaches us how to live rather than knowledge which is continually undergoing evolution and whose limitations are keenly perceived by this generation? Who would remain indifferent in the face of these demands of our times? The best educational reforms, though indispensable, would not give us the satisfactory answer. What we need is a testimony of life. Always prepared, according to the recommendation of the Apostle Peter, "to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1Pt. 3:15), educators will experience with joy the words of Christ to Nicodemus: "he who does what is true comes to the light" (Jn. 3:21).

13. Education, which is rooted in a living experience that communicates, unwearingly pursues its goal: form men, teach them how to live, train them to discover how imprudent it is to act without knowledge, but that to know and not to act would be cowardice. For the acquisition of knowledge and the training of the will are directly focused on personal and social action. There is no education without the application of all the human faculties, nor without the harmonious development of the mind and body. Moreover, is not the one who benefits from education also its principal agent, whose interior dynamism has to be awakened, nourished and directed? Far from restricting man to a situation of passivity, we have to initiate him without delay into assuming responsibilities by gradually entrusting to him tasks to fulfil and decisions to make.

14. There is no education for the sake of education, but education is an effort undertaken by to help other men take their proper place in the community where they live, and in this community exercise in their turn their free and responsible activity. To educate does not mean to transmit abstract knowledge, but to instill a way of life in a particular civilization, and provide the means to realize it: rudimentary knowledge, to be sure, but with the intention to open up avenues for an adaptable formation and help a person learn a trade, perform a useful professional task, and work as a citizen. Therefore, educators are not those who are set in their knowledge which has nothing to do with life and are fixed in stereotyped formulas. True educators are those who are stimulated by a constant concern for study, research and adaptation, who are preoccupied in preparing a future, and who are always alert to the demands of the times and events: inventions, initiatives, and even contestations in order to give these a positive objective, without depriving them of their stimulating function.

15. To fulfil their task properly, educators must become thoroughly integrated within the community in order to be imbued with "its traditions, its needs, its level of culture, its orientations and tendencies ... its requirements ... interpreted at the school level, by individuals and organized groups, by educational or religious institutes, whose specific goal is to prepare youth for their future tasks." (Letter of the Secretariat of State on the occasion of the 45th Social Week in France, on 'L'Enseignement, problème social', in the Report of the Week, Lyon, Social Chronicle of France, 1958, p. 6). A certain intellectual individualism has caused so much havoc that we strongly feel the need for a broader diffusion of education throughout the world (cf. *Message to René Maheu, Director-General of UNESCO, for the International Year of Education*).

III. EDUCATION, A JOINT EFFORT

16. More than ever before, education is a community task which must mobilize to its advantage all the dynamic forces of the community of men: the family in the first place, the teachers at all levels with their specific contribution, the socio-cultural groups and the professional associations, the ecclesial communities, all working generously and unselfishly for the advancement of this great work in the service of the common good whose guarantors are the civil authorities (cf. John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, p. 301 and ff.).

17. As the first educators of their children, parents should be aware of the leading trends in the field of teaching. Their important and irreplaceable influence must be joined harmoniously to those of specialists in order to assure the success of this difficult task of educating youth and preparing them to face their future tasks. For, in order to be successful, education must be considered not as a substitution but as a complement to that of the family. Is it not the practically unique role of parents to assure the harmonious development of the affective faculties of the child? Does not the moral integrity witnessed in the home imprint on man an indelible mark and, at the same time, provide him with a model norm to which he unceasingly has recourse? Because adults are more and more disconcerted when faced with the pressing and sometimes contradictory demands of rising generations, parents and teachers must devise together a common plan which will help them to assure the indispensable transmission of the cultural heritage, to assimilate the ever increasing treasures of sciences and techniques, and finally to prepare today's student to undertake his future professional tasks and civil engagements as a responsible person in the world we are building (Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, p. 450 and ff.).

SEGREGATION MUST BE BANISHED

18. The divisions which too often separate men from each other are the result of a history marked by egoism, ambition, a spirit of domination, personal and collective sin. The child and the adolescent ask for nothing more than to live in mutual relationship with their equals, whatever be their race and social origin, beyond the differences arising from wealth and power. It is therefore of capital importance that all segregation be banished from educational environment, and that this educational environment contribute to the development of the best potentials of each person in a fervid atmosphere of fraternal competition and fruitful friendship.

19. Integration in a distinct culture is on a par with respect due to others. While men discover their differences, they become aware that they complement each other. Their readiness to serve is an essential factor of their formation, so true is it that the command of the judgment and the ability to adapt are particular characteristics of true culture (cf. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 13). All over the world exchanges increase, relations are established, joint interests are formed, and groups of people who were formerly strangers to each other suddenly become familiar. At the same time, we see harmful inequalities and flagrant injustice, which

stimulate the temptation to revolt against the inefficiency of institutions. In fact, do we not see persons and social groups - even entire nations - continue to enrich themselves in a selfish way, while others - the great majority - find themselves doomed to stagnation or even regression?

EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

20. The International Year of Education, combined with the Second Development Decade, offers the providential occasion for a responsible examination of this unworthy phenomenon of civilized humanity. At a time when development in education is mobilizing ever greater forces, these forces would fail in their purpose if they were not to serve education in development with all the means in their power. Indifference and inactivity are no longer acceptable in the face of this drama of our times, denounced with anguish in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. A "conscientiousness," as has been rightly said, becomes indispensable, and we can hope that it will blossom like an irrepressible source of hope throughout the world athirst for justice.

21. By developing minds and molding wills, education awakens consciences and calls for action. Such an effort requires the harmonious cooperation of diverse human communities. The Church, on her part, has no other ambition than to continue to contribute to this effort. Claiming no other purpose than to serve (Vatican Council II, *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, n. 13). Catholic educators wish to work in close relationship with all educators, in loyal collaboration with those who are responsible for the common good of the community. They strive to banish every temptation to narrow self-interest or aggressive rivalry. There will never be enough men of good will to accomplish successfully the task of education which imposes its pressing need on men today, if men are to assure the harmonious development of what is human in man and in society.

AUTHENTIC HUMAN FORMATION

22. At a time when everyone wishes to see a renewal in educational programmes and methods, the Church, faithful to spiritual requirements, exhorts all her children to work with competence, discernment and responsibility – parents, educators, animators – for an authentic human formation. In her own centres of education, the Church strives while imparting necessary knowledge and developing socio-professional abilities, to inculcate a just concept of true values, to form men in personal and social virtues, and to transmit a love for man and a faith in Christ. Wherever Catholics are employed in educational tasks, the Church asks them to distinguish themselves by their generous contribution to the common good, by their unselfishness, their concern to promote fraternal communities, to develop harmoniously all the potentials of persons entrusted to them, and to foster true values.

23. An immense task confronts men today. They will not accomplish it in a spirit of disenchantment. Taking a closer look at the needs of the future, where we can discern the major trends and tie means to respond to them, the International Year of Education provides the

occasion for all responsible men to deepen their convictions and go forward with enthusiasm. Beyond the legitimate differences of convictions among men, they must come to an agreement on a common plan: build together a society of free and responsible men, so true is it that "the most crucial problem in our educational system is not a problem of education, but a problem of civilization." (J. Maritain, *Pour une philosophie de l'éducation*, Paris, Fayard, 1969, p. 155) The ultimate goal of all authentic education is wisdom, composed of knowledge and conscience. By knowledge, man who was the last Creation of God on earth but the only creature endowed with intelligence, penetrates the secrets of nature; by conscience, man marshals his conquests for the service of the human family. Established as lord of creation, man discovers, in his collaboration with the divine plan and in his domination of nature, his dignity as a human person, the foundation of a true fraternal society. What a lofty task for all educators: help men as men to accomplish their marvellous destiny!

*ORa 1971 n. 2 p. 6-7.

Paths to Peace p. 114-119.