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CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

EDUCATING TO INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS. OCTOBER 28, 2013.

This document was prepared for the 48th Anniversary of the Vatican II Declaration, *Gravissimum Educationis*, On Christian Education.

The “global village” means that Catholic schools are seeing the overlapping and ever growing presence of students with different cultures and religious beliefs. A central challenge for education becomes an intercultural education that helps to promote coexistence and build a civilization of love and solidarity among the different cultural and religious expressions. Education must thus train to authentic dialogue, a dialogue that is not a compromise, but which starts from one’s faith identity. Christians start from a concept of human life centered on Jesus Christ and the centrality of the human person made in God’s image. This calls for educating the whole person in all aspects of humanity, while leading a search into the elements that characterize other religions and cultures and searching in common for ethical values that define humanity as such. The teaching of the Catholic faith must be confessional, and not just a presentation of the different religions in a comparative and “neutral” way that causes confusion and affords no solid faith basis from which to dialogue. The ecclesial nature of Catholic schools means an education imbued with a Christian spirit, that nevertheless embraces all things human (Christian humanism) while forming the students to professional competences.

To be avoided is both relativistic neutrality that places cultures alongside one another and views them as substantially equivalent and interchangeable and assimilation that demands that the other adapt to one’s one culture. Rather, an intercultural education aims at integrating cultures in mutual recognition. This approach is founded on the firm belief that every culture is a way of expressing the transcendental aspect of life and has values which are common to all. The human being is not an isolated individual, but a person, a being essentially relational. The model for the human family is the Trinity, which is absolute unity within pure relationality. The basic paradigm of relationality calls for a culture of dialogue, understanding, and mutual transformation to reach the common good. Students need be given tools to understand and interact with other cultures and relate them to their own culture, without prejudices of culture, sex, social class or religion. Mutual respect is not enough; persons need be trained to look again at their own cultures with the cultures of others as their starting point, that is, to “reflect on themselves within a perspective of ‘openness to humanity.’” (no. 63). This calls for a pedagogy of communion that implies gift and reciprocity, “love of education” linked to “education to love” (no. 47). The school must respect the family’s culture and religion: parents have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education their children are to receive (no. 73; cf. Vatican II, Declaration on Human Dignity, no. 5). “Catholic schools are by their very vocation, intercultural” (no. 61). In a Catholic school, one learns to dialogue about the meanings that people of

different religions and cultures attribute to their respective symbols.

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CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES
OF APOSTOLIC LIFE.

***IDENTITY AND MISSION OF THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER IN
THE CHURCH, 'AND YOU ARE ALL BROTHERS' (MATT 23:8).
VATICAN CITY, OCTOBER 4, 2015.***

Steeped in Vatican II and the Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata* (March 25, 1996), this document is based on the ecclesiology of communion and starts from what unites rather than what divides (no. 8) the states of life in the Church. The term, “Brother” (what is said in this document applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to religious Sisters) evokes the common vocation of the Baptized to make the face of Jesus-brother visible in the world—brothers of Christ, brothers to one another in mutual love, brothers to everyone in their witness to Christ’s love for all (no. 11). Saying “Brother” is like saying “mediator of God’s love,” the God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son. Mutual love is the hallmark of Christians (cf. John 13:35) and this is the sign which the Brother offers. Their brotherhood creates brotherhood all around (no. 24). As such, they manifest the essential role of brotherly love as the central core of evangelization (no. 23).

The Brother is consecrated and totally given to God. His vows make sense as a way of including, with different nuances, the whole of existence. He makes an offering of his life that it might become a sign of the primacy of God, of a life only for him, a life of commitment to love as the fundamental orientation of life. He offers himself as a guide in the search for God, an expert guide in the spiritual life, sharing his experiences of a life open to God and to people in the light of the Gospel. His life testifies to an incarnated and unifying spirituality—God’s presence is no longer exclusively in a sacred place, rather in the arcopagus of human life and culture.

Rooting his life deeply in God, the Brother consecrates all creation, recognizing the presence of God and the Spirit’s action in creation, in cultures and in daily events (no. 16). He takes up various fraternal ministries indicated by the charism of his Congregation and shows how one can seek God in the secular realities of culture, science, human health, the workplace and the care of the weak and disadvantaged. With his brothers, he is committed to quality professional service in every task, no matter how profane. He renders fraternal service to everyone and makes present the gospel value of fraternal relationships of equality. Brother of the Christian people, he hears the Lord’s call to his servant, “I have chosen you as a covenant of the people” (Isa 42:6) and discovers himself to be an instrument which God wants to use to make the covenant, God’s love and concern for the weakest, more visible (no. 13). He thus demonstrates that the maternal tenderness of God and the fraternal love of Christ know no boundaries, that the resurrection of Jesus is the pledge of victory, that the

God of life will have the last word over pain and death (no. 29). The life of the Brother gives a clear answer to the question, “who is my brother”—preferably those who most need his solidarity and who are identified by his founding charism (no. 33).

Mixed Institutes, that is, those formed by religious priests and brothers, must maintain among members a way of relating based on equal dignity, without any differences other than those arising from the diversity of their ministries. In this vein, it is hoped that the question concerning the jurisdiction of Brothers in these Institutes will be resolved with determination and within an opportune time frame (no. 39).

This refreshing document merits not just a read but deep meditation by all who live the consecrated life, be they priests, Brothers, or Sisters.

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VATICAN COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS.
***A REFLECTION ON THE THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS PERTAINING
TO CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NOSTRA AETATE, NO. 4 (DEC 10, 2015).***

The Vatican II Declaration on the Relation of the Church with non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 4 dealt, among other things, with the Church’s relations with Judaism. It made clear that if the Church is called the new people of God, it is not in the sense that Israel has ceased being the people of God or that the Church has replaced Israel as the people of God. On 22 October 1974, Paul VI established the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, within the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, to carry on and deepen the Church’s dialogue with Judaism. This Commission has issued many important documents, the latest being the current reflection on theological questions pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations. The Commission (no. 38) made the clarification that it was not *Nostra Aetate*, 4 but Saint John Paul II in a meeting with Jewish representatives in Mainz (17 November 1980) who first explicitly declared that the covenant that God made with Israel perdures and was never invalidated. Following this, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 121 stated that “the Old Covenant has never been revoked.” This means that the Jews can hear and respond to God’s word in the Torah and be made right with God. Are there thus two paths to salvation, one for Jews through Torah, the other for Christians through Christ? Christian faith proclaims that Christ’s work is universal and involves all humankind (no. 25). There cannot, therefore, be two ways of salvation, since Christ is Redeemer of Jews and Gentiles alike (no. 37). That the Jews are participants in God’s salvation is theologically unquestionable, but how that can be possible without confessing Christ explicitly is and remains an unfathomable divine

mystery (no. 36). Meantime, the Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews, even if Christians are called to bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ also to Jews.

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