

II. SPIRITAN VALUES IN EDUCATIONAL WORKS

The person of Jesus Christ is at the centre of all Spiritan education works and therefore Gospel values must permeate the entire educational experience. Any institution or organisation is identified by the values for which it stands. Likewise the Congregation has faith-based values which also embody the living heritage of the Founders. These inherited values, in essence, make Spiritan education Spiritan. Therefore any Spiritan education initiative, whether formal or informal, is expected to inculcate the following values which manifest Spiritan identity and to transmit them from one generation to the next.

2.1 PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

Since the stated purpose of the Congregation in SRL 4 is the “*evangelisation of the “poor” (Lk 4:18)*”, each educational work through its mission, vision and ethos statements, will seek to make this fundamental element of the Spiritan charism a lived reality that gives inspiration and direction. For God loves all people, but His first love is the forgotten, the oppressed and the poor. Consequently Spiritan educational works are called to see the reality of the world from the perspective of the poor, forgotten and oppressed, because that is God’s perspective. This preferential option for the poor is equally expressed in our personal lifestyle and in our way of living as an educational community (Maynooth 2.12 Education; Bagamoyo 1.6; 2.5 and 2.6).

2.2 FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Spiritan educational works actively encourage the recognition of God’s presence in the world and seek to develop a personal faith in the person of Jesus Christ that is dynamic and life-giving. We invite all stakeholders to share in our Spiritan spirituality and like Jesus, we seek to be “*led*

by the Spirit” (Luke 4:1) in our relationships, choices, behaviours and decisions in building the reign of God in the here and now.

2.3 A COMMUNITY OF RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

We foster a family spirit of belonging, care for others, mutual support and a sense of community where the quality of relationships matters. Our educational works are places where the paths of many cross in significant ways and where human experience has the potential to be enriched through respectful relationships and mutual learning, which in turn become the foundation for building community and relationships beyond our education centres. In our educational communities, where administrators, educators, staff, students, parents, family members and supportive friends continually interact, we value diversity, age and gender differences as a gift from God and recognise the importance of transparency, the collaboration of all and accountability in building mutual trust.

2.4 JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC)

We make ourselves *“the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them”* (SRL 14). Furthermore, Bagamoyo clearly identified *“education as a way to the integral liberation of individuals and peoples”*(1.4) and the work of *“JPIC”* as central to Spiritan identity (2.5). As Pope Francis says, *“the world’s problems cannot be analysed or explained in isolation. ... Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society”* (Laudato Si, 61 & 91). Consequently, an important task of Spiritan educational works is the integration of the social dimensions into learning programmes that involve creating awareness of the deeper structural causes of oppression, poverty and the destruction of creation.

2.5 HOLISTIC AND PERSON-CENTRED EDUCATION

Spiritan education seeks to provide the fullest possible growth experience by prioritising the integration of the spiritual, human, intellectual, physical, social, and cultural potential of each individual student. Students are assisted in their human growth through a pedagogy and practice based on reflection and action that enables them to experience a deeper way of thinking and living, thus preparing them to discover their vocation in life as conscientious citizens.

2.6 ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Spiritan educational works are committed to academic excellence in teaching and instruction both in and out of the classroom. Students are helped to gain knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that are relevant to their life experience. We seek to motivate with insights and encourage individuals to strive for excellence at the level of each one's potential, thus providing an all-around educational experience that helps persons find their way in life.

2.7 INCLUSION AND DIALOGUE WITH OTHER FAITH TRADITIONS

Spiritan educational works are welcoming and inclusive of all, regardless of any form of disability, ethnic, social or religious backgrounds. In dialogue with people of different Christian traditions and faiths, our educational works seek to be instruments of reconciliation, respect and mutual trust where there are divisions or disunity along cultural, social, religious or ethnic lines.

2.8 A SPIRIT OF SERVICE AND OF SHARING

In the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, offering service and sharing are central to the Christian way of life. Luke's Gospel shows how Jesus Christ attended to everyone, both rich and poor, and how he received financial patronage to assist him in his ministry (Lk 8:1-3).

Consequently at the heart of our educational works is a spirit of service and sharing with those we work with and serve. Therefore, the gifts, resources and talents of the educational community are offered in service, so as to develop the unique potential of each individual and to serve our neighbour not as a charity but in justice. For ‘*when someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person*’ (Lk12:48) and ‘*if anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all*’ (Mk 9:35).

2.9 EVALUATION, RENEWAL & INITIATIVE

Educational works, like any other, evolve over time and can therefore find themselves in a situation whereby they no longer serve their original founding purpose. SRL 25 calls upon Spiritans to be “*attentive to the signs of the times*” and to “*re-examine periodically the reasons that underlie our present commitment and our present apostolate.*” Such a re-examination or evaluation of an educational work, done in collaboration with our partners, may lead us to its renewal by making adaptations to find a new focus or to develop new initiatives. Alternatively, it may lead us to leave a particular educational project that no longer contributes to the ideals and overall purpose of the Congregation which is at the service of “*the evangelization of the poor*” (SRL 4).