**II. A JOURNEY OF FORMATION FOR EDUCATING TOGETHER**

20. Educating the young generations in communion and for communion in the Catholic school is a serious commitment that must not be taken lightly. It must be duly prepared and sustained through an initial and permanent project of formation that is able to grasp the educational challenges of the present time and to provide the most effective tools for dealing with them within the sphere of a shared mission. This implies that educators must be willing to learn and develop knowledge and be open to the renewal and updating of methodologies, but open also to spiritual and religious formation and sharing. In the context of the present day, this is essential for responding to the expectations that come from a constantly and rapidly changing world in which it is increasingly difficult to educate.

***Professional formation***

21. One of the fundamental requirements for an educator in a Catholic school is his or her possession of a solid professional formation. Poor quality teaching, due to insufficient professional preparation or inadequate pedagogical methods, unavoidably undermines the effectiveness of the overall formation of the student and of the cultural witness that the educator must offer.

22. The professional formation of the educator implies a vast range of cultural, psychological and pedagogical skills, characterized by autonomy, planning and evaluation capacity, creativity, openness to innovation, aptitude for updating, research and experimentation. It also demands the ability to synthesize professional skills with educational motivations, giving particular attention to the relational situation required today by the increasingly collegial exercise of the teaching profession. Moreover, in the eyes and expectations of students and their families, the educator is seen and desired as a welcoming and prepared interlocutor, able to motivate the young to a complete formation, to encourage and direct their greatest energy and skills towards a positive construction of themselves and their lives, and to be a serious and credible witness of the responsibility and hope which the school owes to society.

23. The continuous rapid transformation that affects man and today’s society in all fields leads to the precocious aging of acquired knowledge that demands new attitudes and methods. The educator is required to constantly update the contents of the subjects he teaches and the pedagogical methods he uses. The educator’s vocation demands a ready and constant ability for renewal and adaptation. It is not, therefore, sufficient to achieve solely an initial good level of preparation; rather what is required is to maintain it and elevate it in a journey of permanent formation. Because of the variety of aspects that it involves, permanent formation demands a constant personal and communal search for its forms of achievement, as well as a formation course that is also shared and developed through exchange and comparison between consecrated and lay educators of the Catholic school.

24. It is not sufficient simply to care about professional updating in the strict sense. The synthesis between faith, culture and life that educators of the Catholic school are called to achieve is, in fact, reached «by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel […and] in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian»[[24]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn24%22%20%5Co%20%22). This means that Catholic educators must attain a special sensitivity with regard to the person to be educated in order to grasp not only the request for growth in knowledge and skills, but also the need for growth in humanity. Thus educators must dedicate themselves «to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity »[[25]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn25%22%20%5Co%20%22).

25. For this reason, Catholic educators need «a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others», so that their educational commitment becomes «a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. *Gal* 5:6)»[[26]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn26%22%20%5Co%20%22). In fact, even «care for instruction means loving» (*Wis* 6:17). It is only in this way that they can make their teaching a school of faith, that is to say, a transmission of the Gospel, as required by the educational project of the Catholic school.

***Theological and spiritual formation***

26. The transmission of the Christian message through teaching implies a mastery of the knowledge of the truths of the faith and of the principles of spiritual life that require constant improvement. This is why both consecrated and lay educators of the Catholic school need to follow an opportune formational theological itinerary[[27]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn27%22%20%5Co%20%22). Such an itinerary makes it easier to combine the understanding of faith with professional commitment and Christian action. Apart from their theological formation, educators need also to cultivate their spiritual formation in order to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ and become a Master like Him. In this sense, the formational journey of both lay and consecrated educators must be combined with the moulding of the person towards greater conformity with Christ (cf. *Rm* 8:29) and of the educational community around Christ the Master. Moreover, the Catholic school is well aware that the community that it forms must be constantly nourished and compared with the sources from which the reason for its existence derives: the saving word of God in Sacred Scripture, in Tradition, above all liturgical and sacramental Tradition, enlightened by the Magisterium of the Church[[28]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn28%22%20%5Co%20%22).

*The contribution of consecrated persons to shared formation*

27. Consecrated persons who profess the evangelical counsels show that they live for God and of God and become concrete witnesses to the Trinitarian love, so that people can experience the charm of divine beauty. Thus, the first and foremost contribution to the shared mission is the evangelical deep-rootedness of the lives of consecrated persons. Because of their vocational journey, they possess a theological-spiritual preparation that, centred on the mystery of Christ living in the Church, needs to unceasingly progress in step with the Church that progresses in history towards the «complete truth» (*Jn* 16:13). Again within this exquisitely ecclesial dynamic, consecrated persons also are invited to share the fruits of their formation with the laity, especially with those who feel that they are called «[to share] specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission of the Institute»[[29]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn29%22%20%5Co%20%22). In this way, Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life involved in education will manage to assure an essential openness to the Church and keep alive the spirit of the Founders and Foundresses, while also renewing a particularly precious aspect of the tradition of the Catholic school. From the very beginning, in fact, Founders and Foundresses paid special attention to the *formation of the educators* and they often devoted their best energies to this. Such formation, then as now, is not only aimed at strengthening professional skills, but above all, at highlighting the vocational dimension of the teaching profession, promoting the development of a mentality that is inspired by evangelical values, according to the specific characteristics of the Institute’s mission. Therefore, «formation programmes which include regular courses of study and prayerful reflection on the founder, the charism and the constitutions of the institute are particularly beneficial »[[30]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn30%22%20%5Co%20%22).

28. In many religious Institutes, sharing the educational mission with the laity has already existed for some time, having been born with the religious community present in the school. The development of “spiritual families”, of groups of “associated lay people” or other forms that permit the lay faithful to draw spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness from the original charism, appears as a positive element and one of great hope for the future of the Catholic educational mission.

29. It is almost superfluous to note that, within the perspective of the Church-communion, these programmes of formation for sharing in the mission and lives of the laity, in the light of the relativecharism, should be designed and implemented even where vocations to the consecrated life are numerous.

*The contribution of lay persons to shared formation*

30. While invited to deepen their vocation as educators in the Catholic school in communion with consecrated persons, the lay faithful also are called in the common formational journey to give the original and irreplaceable contribution of their full ecclesial subjectivity. This involves, first and foremost, that they discover and live in their «life of a lay person […] a specific “wonderful” vocation within the Church»[[31]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn31%22%20%5Co%20%22): the vocation to «seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will»[[32]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn32%22%20%5Co%20%22). As educators they are called on to live «in faith a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person»[[33]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn33%22%20%5Co%20%22).

31. It should be emphasized that the special contribution that lay educators can bring to the formational journey derives precisely from their secular nature that makes them especially able to grasp “the signs of the times”[[34]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn34%22%20%5Co%20%22). In fact, by living their faith in the everyday conditions of their families and society, they can help the entire educational community to distinguish more precisely the evangelical values and the opposite values that these signs contain.

32. With the gradual development of their ecclesial vocation, lay people become increasingly more aware of their participation in the educational mission of the Church. At the same time, they are also driven to carry out an active role in the spiritual animation of the community that they build together with the consecrated persons. «Communion and mutuality in the Church are never one way streets»[[35]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn35%22%20%5Co%20%22). If, in fact, in the past it was mostly priests and religious who spiritually nourished and directed the lay faithful, now it is often «the lay faithful themselves [who] can and should help priests and religious in the course of their spiritual and pastoral journey»[[36]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn36%22%20%5Co%20%22) .

33. In the perspective of formation, by sharing their life of prayer and opportune forms of community life, the lay faithful and consecrated persons will nourish their reflection, their sense of fraternity and generous dedication. In this common catechetical-theological and spiritual formational journey, we can see the face of a Church that presents that of Christ, praying, listening, learning and teaching in fraternal communion.

***Formation in the spirit of communion for educating***

34. By its very nature, the Catholic school requires the presence and involvement of educators that are not only culturally and spiritually formed, but also intentionally directed at developing their community educational commitment in an authentic spirit of ecclesial communion.

35. It is also through their formational journey that educators are called on to build relationships at professional, personal and spiritual levels, according to the logic of communion. For each one this involves being open, welcoming, disposed to a deep exchange of ideas, convivial and living a fraternal life within the educational community itself. The parable of the talents (*Matt.* 25:14-30) helps us to understand how each one is called to make his or her gifts bear fruit and to welcome the riches of others within the shared educational mission.

36. The shared mission, besides, is enriched by the differences that the lay faithful and consecrated persons bring when they come together in different expressions of charism. These charisms are none other than different gifts with which the same Spirit enriches the Church and the world[[37]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn37%22%20%5Co%20%22). In the Catholic school, therefore, «by avoiding both confrontation and homologation, the reciprocity of vocations seems to be a particularly fertile prospect for enriching the ecclesial value of educational communities. In them the various vocations […] are correlative, different and mutual paths that converge to bring to fulfilment the charism of charisms: love»[[38]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn38%22%20%5Co%20%22).

37. Organized according to the diversities of persons and vocations, but vivified by the same spirit of communion, the educational community of the Catholic school aims at creating increasingly deeper relationships of communion that are in themselves educational. Precisely in this, it «expresses the variety and beauty of the various vocations and the fruitfulness at educational and pedagogical levels that this contributes to the life of the school »[[39]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn39%22%20%5Co%20%22).

*Witness and culture of communion*

38. This fruitfulness is expressed, above all, in the witness offered by the educational community. Certainly in schools, education is essentially accomplished through teaching, which is the vehicle through which ideas and beliefs are communicated. In this sense, «words are the main roads in educating the mind»[[40]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn40%22%20%5Co%20%22). This does not mean, however, that education is not accomplished in other situations of scholastic life. Thus teachers, just like every person who lives and works in a scholastic environment, educate, or they can also dis-educate, with their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. «The central figure in the work of educating, and especially in education in the faith, which is the summit of the person’s formation and is his or her most appropriate horizon, is specifically the form of witness»[[41]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn41%22%20%5Co%20%22). «More than ever this demands that witness, nourished by prayer, be the all-encompassing milieu of every Catholic school. Teachers, as witnesses, account for the hope that nourishes their own lives (cf. *1 Pt* 3:15) by living the truth they propose to their pupils, always in reference to the one they have encountered and whose dependable goodness they have sampled with joy. And so with Saint Augustine they say: “We who speak and you who listen acknowledge ourselves as fellow disciples of a single teacher” (*Sermons,* 23:2)»[[42]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn42%22%20%5Co%20%22). In educational communities, therefore, the style of life has great influence, especially if the consecrated persons and the lay faithful work together, fully sharing the commitment to develop, in the school, «an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel»[[43]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn43%22%20%5Co%20%22). This requires that each one contributes the specific gift of his or her vocation to construct a family supported by charity and by the spirit of the beatitudes.

39. By giving witness of communion, the Catholic educational community is able to *educate for communion*, which, as a gift that comes from above, animates the project of formation for living together in harmony and being welcoming. Not only does it cultivate in the students the cultural values that derive from the Christian vision of reality, but it also involves each one of them in the life of the community, where values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relationships among the various members that form it, and by the individual and community acceptance of them. In this way, the life of communion of the educational community assumes the value of an educational principle, of a paradigm that directs its formational action as a service for the achievement of a culture of communion. Education in the Catholic school, therefore, through the tools of teaching and learning, «is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things»[[44]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn44%22%20%5Co%20%22). This principle affects every scholastic activity, the teaching and even all the after-school activities such as sport, theatre and commitment in social work, which promote the creative contribution of the students and their socialization.

*Educational community and vocational pastoral activity*

40. The shared mission experienced by an educational community of lay and consecrated persons, with an active vocational conscience, makes the Catholic school a pedagogical place that favours *vocational pastoral activity*. The very composition of such an educational community of a Catholic school highlights the diversity and complementarity of vocations in the Church[[45]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn45%22%20%5Co%20%22), of which it, too, is an expression. In this sense, the communitarian dynamics of the formational experience become the horizon where the student can feel what it means to be a member of the biggest community which is the Church. And to experience the Church means to personally meet the living Christ in it: «a young man can truly understand Christ’s will and his own vocation only to the extent that he has a personal experience of Christ»[[46]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn46%22%20%5Co%20%22). In this sense, the Catholic school is committed to guiding its students to knowing themselves, their attitudes and their interior resources, educating them in spending their lives responsibly as a daily response to God’s call. Thus, the Catholic school accompanies its students in conscious choices of life: to follow their vocation to the priesthood or to consecrated life or to accomplish their Christian vocation in family, professional and social life.

41. In fact, the daily dialogue and confrontation with lay and consecrated educators, who offer a joyful witness of their calling, will more easily direct a young person in formation to consider his or her life as a vocation, as a journey to be lived together, grasping the signs through which God leads to the fullness of existence. Similarly, it will make him or her understand how necessary it is to know how to listen, to interiorize values, to learn to assume commitments and make life choices.

42. Therefore, the formational experience of the Catholic school constitutes an impressive barrier against the influence of a widespread mentality that leads young people especially «to consider themselves and their lives as a series of sensations to be experienced rather than as a work to be accomplished»[[47]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn47%22%20%5Co%20%22). At the same time, it contributes to insuring strong character formation [….] capable both of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism and of living up to the demands made on them by their Baptism »[[48]](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn48%22%20%5Co%20%22).

Source: Congregation for Catholic Education, Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A shared mission between consecrated persons and the lay faithful (September 8, 2007)