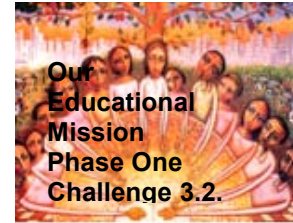


CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION, UNITY IN DIVERSITY



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"To continue advancing together, lay and religious, believers and non-believers, all those with whom we co-responsibly share the mission of education

I. FOUR FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

The definition of this challenge speaks of complementarity and co-responsibility. I consider it important to frame these concepts in a sequence of four terms that try to express what is most essential in this challenge from the spiritual and pastoral perspective: fraternity, complementarity, reciprocity and unity.

I.1 FRATERNITY

Whenever we face the necessity of renewal in the Church, there is a need to go back to the more solid and basic truths, those that appear to be too well-known and that we've sometimes easily skipped over.

What is most essential to our concept of community is that God is Love. We are all His children and thus we are brothers and sisters to each other. (Cf. 1 Jn. 2-4) This recognition of our fundamental fraternal identity should always be foremost and is the basis of all considerations, whatever may be our state of grace, civil status or age: we are all children of the same Father, and therefore subject to the same dignity of Love.

In the community life of a religious congregation or in a school community we certainly need structures, institutions, rules, authorities; it is easy to lose sight of the fundamental idea of being a single family, in which case it becomes unclear why a Muslim, an atheist, a lay person, a boy or a girl are, basically and above all else, a brother and a sister to us.

I.2 COMPLEMENTARITY

That we are all brothers and sisters does not mean that we are identical, and therefore what we share with one another is complimentary. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that every one has something to contribute to the community and even those who, in human or professional terms, may seem "less" - the poor beneficiaries of our services, the children, and the less involved parents ... - all have something specific to contribute to the harmony of the community.

The idea of complementarity raises a special challenge in community life because of the inevitability of diverse ideas and points of view present within and among the members. There is the risk of considering the differences as "threats" more than

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opportunities for enrichment. Very often there is an attempt to show that the person who does not think like us has deviated from the group and excluded him/herself from the process of unity. It is difficult to acknowledge that the "splendor of the Truth" of God is something that we can only reach in the union of love with each other. (Cf. Jn. 17, 21-26) The acceptance and welcoming of the differences as something enriching for union is a necessary and difficult exercise. It is often much easier to accept and understand those convictions most radically different from our own (e.g., ecumenical dialogue, dialogue with atheist, etc.) rather than a religious or a colleague who manifests a different opinion.

To make complementarity a reality in our life we all have to cultivate a discipline of recognizing and appreciating differences. Jesus says "if God makes the sun shine and the rain fall, both on the good and the bad, why do you make exceptions regarding people?" Of course, we must start with tolerance for what is different. Saint Paul recommended the same to the first Christians: "bear with one another..." (Col. 3, 13) Undoubtedly it was also necessary for the primitive community to mutually support one another.

I.3 RECIPROCITY

A significant step forward from the recognition and appreciation of radical fraternity and of the necessary and valuable complementarity in our differences is the possibility of developing relationships according to the New Commandment: *"Love one another reciprocally"*.

An ecclesiology of communion lived seriously requires insistence on the crucial bond of the New Commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 15, 12). This bond of reciprocal love is what makes us worthy to experience the presence of Jesus among us in the here and now. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Mt. 18, 20)

There have been moments in the history of the Church when the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist or in the liturgical celebration took on such a strong focus that it somehow blurred other "presences" that were central to the experience of the primitive Church, such as the presence of God in the Word and His presence in the other...

The presence of Jesus, "in the midst" of a community that reciprocally loved one another was a clear conscious experience, made real and in a sense even required in the primitive Church. It is expressed in the words of the disciples in Emmaus "were not our hearts burning within us" felt by the disciples (Lk. 24, 32) . The institutionalization of community life may lose sight of this promise of Jesus, a reality as engaging and real as the Eucharistic presence which requires spiritual preparation to make us worthy of it.

To recognize the presence of Jesus among us, to recognize Him when we are living together in mutual love, and to re-create such a presence when we lose it, is a communal effort, valid both for religious and for lay people alike, and is central to real communion among all.

I.4 UNITY

At the Last Supper Jesus says: "Father I ask you that they may be one so that the world may believe". With these words Jesus creates a direct link between unity and the credibility of the Church. The scandal of our divisions does not end in the schisms: the internal disputes in our communities are sometimes as bad as the political confrontations - a scandal both for believers and non-believers.

To give primacy to what unifies rather than what separates us, to appreciate differences as a richness, to invest the best of our efforts so that authentic unity may reign in the educational community, are not theoretical questions. They are part of

daily life of the Christian community, and the only guarantee of authentic renewal in the Spirit and of credibility to those who do not believe.

Within this frame work I would like to propose two basic levels in bringing about unity: unity among those who - lay or consecrated - share the faith in Christ, and the common endeavor to foster fraternal and evangelizing relationships in the educational community, whether one shares the Catholic faith or not.

II - LAITY AND RELIGIOUS: TOWARDS EFFECTIVE UNITY IN THE DIVERSITY OF CHARISMS AND CALLS

II.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: "TO MAKE HASTE" WITH THE PATIENCE OF "PROLONGED TIME"

Throughout the Chapter Document the word "to make haste" is reiterated time and time again. I believe that it is extremely pertinent to think that there is an urgency in facing the ecclesial changes proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council for almost 40 years ago now, as expressed in the *Christi fidei laici* and in the reform of Canon Law. It is still not part of the daily life of the People of God: the appreciation of the laity and their mission, and the openness to new forms of ecclesial communion with the consecrated *Christi fidei*.

"To make haste" in fulfilling the mandates of the Council is our responsibility, but it is important to be aware that time in the Church is always a "prolonged" time. The French historian Fernand Braudel maintains that there are historical changes that take place in "brief times", others that take place in average or "circumstantial times", and some in prolonged or "structural times". Governments change in "brief periods"; socio-economic structures, in "average times"; but mentalities always change in prolonged times that can take centuries. Braudel gives as an example that people can change governments very quickly, and can even change its form in a year or two, but the way to celebrate the cult and the burial of their dead can take thousands of years to change.

In the Church, as such, the great changes always occur in the realm of "prolonged" times. Since the middle ages the Church defined consecrated life as the "state of perfection" which relegated the life of the laity to an intrinsic condition of "imperfection". It is necessary to acknowledge that only by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century did the rediscovery of the lay vocation begin, primarily moved by the intervention of the Holy Spirit through charisms centered in the appreciation for the role of lay educators (Don Bosco), of human work (Escriva de Balaguer), and of the universal call to sanctity with Mary as model (P. Jose Kentenich, Chiara Lubich), to mention only some. Vatican II made mention of that experience in its Ecclesiology of the People of God (*Ecclesiam Suam*), and Pope John Paul II gave it a definite impetus with the Synod of the Laity and the *Christi fidelis laici* (CL), as well as with the reform of Canon Law that made possible new roles for the laity in the Church.

In the life of the Church half a century is an average or "short time". For that reason I believe that it is necessary to find a healthy balance in the need "to make haste", because it is up to us in our time to take this step and what we fail to do delays or makes it difficult to incarnate this call of the Spirit. On the other hand, to believe in the fact that everything we do will give bountiful harvest in "prolonged time."

In this sense it is necessary to become aware that Second Vatican Council's vision of the Church as People of God, as communion between all the *Christi fidei*, lay or consecrated, will be incarnated in an historical process. Models of co-existence that have been around for many centuries require adequate reflection and need to be outgrown. They are often what we consider "normal", precisely because they are very

well rooted in our cultural lifestyles; not calling them into question prevents us from change.

There are lay people who act as if the appreciation of the lay vocation is a "fight among classes" or a union dispute. They maintain that the vocation of the laity is not made possible because bishops do not give them space, because women are discriminated against, because of the Pope..., because of priests... Surely there are attitudes of the hierarchy and religious that must change; but also, things remain the same because of the attitudes of laypeople who perpetuate positions of extreme dependency, of improper role imitation, of unnecessary confrontation, and because of their lack of initiative and creativity in responding to the challenges of reality.

On the side of religious there is apathy due to formation itself. The laity and their mission is not part of the curriculum in religious formation. The charisms that the Holy Spirit has poured out on the lay movements in the last century are normally not included in the study program in seminaries, nor in the institutes of religious formation. Ignorance of the lay vocation, of new fields opened to its action in pastoral life by the reform of the Canon Law but, above all - on the existence and mission of the laity- is still too vast.

Nevertheless, one of the great legacies of Pope John Paul II has been exactly his understanding and appreciation for the identity of the laity, and the impetus that he gave to the development of great lay movements (Saint Egidio, Schoenstatt, Focolare, Neo-catechumenate, Communion and Liberation, and so many others), as well as to the leadership of competent laypersons in the Academies of Vatican Sciences and other ecclesial organisms. We run the risk of creating an immense gap between the thinking and self-awareness of committed lay people and the awareness that priests and religious have of the process they undergoing.

Even today, the definition that many consecrated persons give as to who is a layperson is usually construed in the negative: laypeople are those who are not consecrated and are not religious. Another equally limiting variant is the definition which almost automatically associates lay vocation to married life, vocations that can coincide in the life of a person but that constitute two different calls, each with its own entity.

The everyday language of the church is representative of this apathy. Expressions such as these still exist: to have a "vocation" is understood as referring to those who consecrate themselves with religious vows. The lay vocation is too often perceived, even by the laity themselves, as a "leftover" vocation. If you do not have a "vocation" you remain a lay person.

Making the world a consecrated space where the laity can fulfill their life and mission implies complex questions and in most cases it is a new concept in the life of the Church: the legitimate autonomy of the secular, the opening up of diverse fields for pastoral pursuits for laypersons who incarnate their social commitment in their present state - the "pastoral sect" or the "agoras", as defined by Pope John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*. This must take place not only in parishes and schools, but it is hoped that the life of the People of God and so many others will be enlightened by the necessary dialogue between committed laity in the fields of politics, culture and society, and the bishops, theologians and the consecrated religious who write ecclesial documents.

A systematic and joint effort of revising and overcoming the apathy regarding language, images, and forms of pastoral accompaniment that we associate with lay and religious vocations is necessary for both laity and consecrated persons in order to "make haste" in bringing about authentic communion.

II.2 "AN AFFECTIVE SENSE OF BELONGING" AND A COMMON EXPERIENCE OF THE FOUNDATIONAL CHARISM

"To make haste" in the life of the Church may imply a return to the origins: in the primitive Christian communities the role of authority was much closer to the community, and much more interchangeable. There existed no border lines between what the virgins could do and what the non-virgins could not. Most central to the life of the primitive Church was the deep consciousness of what St. Paul expressed in his discourse on charism to the Corinthians: all are not head and all are not hands... but all are part of the Body of Christ (Cf. 1 Cor. 12, 12-31)

It seems that throughout the centuries that wonderful metaphor of unity has been reduced to indicate those who are the head and who are the hands, and that the hands are for doing what the head says. An careful reading of Saint Paul encourages us to appreciate the one who, in our educational community, is the **heart** who watches over others and motivates from the affective level; the one who is the **muscle** who can contribute an extra ounce of impetus; the one who is the **bone** that keeps the group united, and who can attest to the fact that the exercise of authority is not necessarily the only relationship possible.

In direct relationship with this consideration of the Body of Christ and of one's own community from the perspective of "unity in diversity", Von Balthasar spoke of the "Petrine charism" (associated to the hierarchic authority) and of the "Marian charism" in the Church, a theme restated by Pope John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* to show that in the Church the primacy of Mary is most important - and the femininity of love. *"This Marian profile is equally - if not much more - fundamental and characteristic for the Church than the apostolic and petrine profile, to which she is deeply united... The Marian dimension of the Church precedes the petrine one, although they are closely united and complementary"* (MD 27, note 55). By definition, the laity and religious are expressions of the Marian charism, and "imitation of Mary" would have to be a common spiritual path for both.

I do not wish to have these references sound excessively spiritual or theological, because a new appreciation of the life and mission – kerygma - of the laity and of consecrated persons entails many practical consequences in the daily life of the educational community.

I would like to basically indicate three specific challenges in this sense:

a. The need to create new spaces of belonging for those laypeople more deeply committed to the charism of the Company

The Holy Spirit gave to the Foundress of the Company of Mary a charism that can and must be lived by the laity and religious in an atmosphere of warm belonging, of fraternity, of reciprocal love. Surely in each community there is a small group of lay directors, teachers or of parents who are particularly close to the spirituality and the daily life of the Company.

In more recent congregations there are spaces anticipated in the Statutes for those laypersons who feel specially identified with the original charism (like the "Salesian collaborators", or the lay associate belonging to the secular Institute of Shoenstatt). Nevertheless, these juridical structures are not indispensable, and it is not necessarily required to make structural reforms or to modify the statutes in order to open new spaces for the committed laypersons of each community. These spaces of encounter for lay people who feel identified with the charism, where they have the possibility to make their own the charism, either by themselves or accompanied by religious, are very rich. They facilitate the work of giving spiritual accompaniment to the laity, and also offer the opportunity for a more balanced dialogue between the religious community and the other entity.

In this sense, an important challenge lies in creating an atmosphere openness that somehow gives visibility to laypersons who more closely share the life of the charism, where they may be spiritually nourished, and may be able to interact with greater

"familiarily" with the religious, even including at times, being involved in processes of decision making.

We are not talking here about "delegating tasks to the laypeople" only when we do not have vocations to maintain the positions that before were exclusive to religious. We know that there are congregations that "have practically dumped" on the shoulders of laypeople ministerial responsibilities with little or no previous preparation, nor spiritual support during the transition.

We understand that the option to create new spaces for the laity has to do with an ecclesiology of communion, not exclusively with strategic decisions for distribution of human resources. It is about sharing responsibilities, creating another type of encounter and about the spiritual and affective accompaniment in living out the charism together.

In this sense, many congregations have begun their own youth groups which are not only seedbeds of religious vocations but also opportunities for growing together with the new generations - lay and consecrated - affiliated to the charism.

One sees clearly that there are congregations that have managed to create youth movements, spaces of belonging for students with greater conviction, and thus, not accidentally, continue having vocations. On the other hand, there is the paradox of religious Orders with enormous schools but without vocations.

b. To encourage co-responsibility among all laypersons in the educational community

This option for the common experience of the charism sustains the assumption of co-responsibility with all laypersons that are disposed to it.

Normally one thinks about co-responsibility in adult terms, and mainly in relation to school directors and teachers. It is important to stress that co-responsibility, which naturally must be a given among the directors, whether they are lay or religious, must also be present between the directors and the teachers. It must be part of the educational and evangelizing mission, and also in relation to the administrative and non-teaching personnel.

One of the things that becomes clear in pedagogy is that the "secret curriculum of the school" is given by all adults who are in the institution. The school does not only educate through explicit teaching, through the knowledge that it transmits, but also through the models of interpersonal relationships and co-existence that it presents to the students. There are schools where the receptionist is a key person, and the attitude with which children and families are received says more of the school than its many "institutional mission statements". These roles of lay evangelizers are not often sufficiently recognized and appreciated, and they too have something to do with the educational mission. Laypersons who occupy administrative and non-teaching positions require spiritual accompaniment and spaces of co-responsibility to be able to optimize their contribution to the educational community.

On the other hand, the students can and must be seen as laity in formation and collaborators in the evangelizing mission of the Company. It is important to see our students as persons who, although are in a process of vocational discernment, by the fact of being young and which have to be accompanied in a path of discernment about their future, in the specific and in the present, are lay people. We accompany them as they are and as co-responsible in the mission of evangelization.

c. Parents : Co-responsibility and the mission of evangelization

It has always been assumed - at least in Catholic countries like Argentina, at least in name, that if parents send their children to Catholic schools it is because they decide on a Christian education for them.

The fact is that the families who send their children to Catholic schools are more and more becoming "mission fields" especially in the great urban centers. Sometimes the generation that is sending their children to Catholic schools did not even have a cultural contact with the Church, that is in terms of the sacraments. Many of them have grown without a religious reference, the number of separated families is increasing, coming together again after divorce, and there are more and more frequent cases of clear conflict between the values practiced at home and the ones taught in the school.

The catholic school has to be seen, more and more, as a place of evangelization, of conversion, of necessary presentation - respectful, but clear; clear, but respectful of Christianity in the face of diversity. At the same time, we must continue offering the possibility of maturing in faith without "watering it down" to those families who have opted for the school as a place of religious growth for their children.

I believe that this situation challenges the Catholic school towards a double dynamic:

On one hand, it is urgent to add to the mission of evangelization, in the spirit of co-responsibility, those families who identify themselves with the mission of the school. They are the fathers, mothers and students who are better able to evangelize their circle through interpersonal contact, and not only to accompany them in a permanent education of the faith, but to make them leaders in the evangelizing mission.

On the other hand, it is necessary to create strategies in relation to those families that tolerate but do not share our message. We will dedicate the last point of this reflection paper to this subject.

III. UNITY IN DIVERSITY regarding the educational community in general and to the community which is its point of reference.

To take an extreme example, in Korea, 90% of students in Catholic schools come from Buddhist families who send their children there because they consider that the academic level and the discipline are good. The schools accept them, respecting this diversity, and from that respectful stance they evangelize. Saved the differences, we would have to accept the fact that we are in a secularized society, and that we cannot discount the adhesion of families to the Catholic faith or to the thinking of the school, but that we must give testimony of the necessary respect to the multitude of beliefs that coexist today in our schools.

In this sense, surely a point of equilibrium is always necessary, but that is not easy to find, between respect that comes from a resignation not to evangelize, and an intense evangelization that - if perceived as imposition - and which is counter-productive.

The unity in diversity in the educational community is expressed in diverse forms in the relationship between non-believers and believers of other religions.

Mainly in countries where Catholics are the majority we must still grow much in the knowledge and respect for believers of other religions. In this regard, we need preparation in understanding the identity of the laity as well as an ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. These dialogue movements have grown a great deal in the last few years, but without a suitable formation of the laity and the religious, inter-religious or ecumenical dialogue can become a shallow encounter that offers a seal to

superficial agreements, in the best of cases, and in the worst, of syncretistic confusion.

The bond with parents and students who do not share the faith, and profess themselves as agnostics or atheists, can be characterized by an attitude of evangelization and hospitality, or of subtle condemnation or exclusion. In almost all Catholic schools there is no longer an exclusion of agnostics or of divorced families, but the mere fact that they are not excluded does not mean that we have taken on an attitude of evangelizing hospitality. I have the impression that we have been in a limbo wherein we did not exclude anybody, but neither do we do something special to evangelize those who do not believe.

To cultivate fraternity and reciprocal love is a key subject for those who are part of the educational community but who do not agree totally with the Catholic faith. Our love for the other must begin with respect, but non-imposition does not mean to set aside love for the truth. If the truth that arises from faith is not likeable or politically correct, that does not exclude my right - and the obligation - to proclaim the "splendor of the truth", that is always the "splendor of charity" (*Veritatis Splendor*).

What opportunities do we offer to share this splendor of Truth-Love to those who do not share our faith? We have the missionary group or the prayer group for the students or the families who share our faith. And what do we offer to the others?

Sometimes the other person who does not believe, or who believes in non-belief, often practices Christian love more effectively and much more commendably than those who know all the ecclesial documents. Specific acts of charity and the preferential love for the poor is a meeting point to which we can summon all of the educational community without exclusion. If our action of solidarity is not simply social work, but an evangelizing action in itself, the "splendor of charity" will be one of the privileged ways of evangelization for the students and parents who participate.

On the other hand, if the educational community is not engaged in the dialogue of love in solidarity with the community which it is a part of - that is wider than the educational community, it loses a fundamental educational dimension. We speak so much of the integral formation of people, but if the school is locked up solely in academics, in mere teaching and does not include the practice of going out towards the community, it not only loses a dimension of testimony but it loses an educational opportunity, as well.

To educate for solidarity, to generate projects in which the students apply what they learn in the school to the service of the community, where families can be involved, implies creating a proposal of education in values apt both for nonbelievers and believers. If we teach our students to love their neighbor, it does not matter what may have been our catechesis, in the last day they will be able pass that "final test" that we all have to face: "I was naked and you clothed me, I was hungry and you gave me food to eat..." (Mt. 25).

When we learn to love our neighbor, sooner or later somehow the Lord will manifest Himself ("to him who loves I will show myself"), and surely it will be proclaimed to those whom our words did not reach.

Ultimately, we propose to create educational communities of co-responsible laity and religious in charge of the evangelizing mission that gives testimony to reciprocal love and unity in diversity, and from which respect for diversity offers to all members opportunities to love their neighbor with truth and deeds.

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