

ORIONINE EDUCATIONAL PLAN

On the centenary of the first College opened by Don Orione
1893 – 1993

**Little Work of Divine Providence
(Don Orione)**

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1994
General Curia
Secretariat for the Educational Apostolate
Via Etruria, 6 – 00183 Rome

“I feel it is my duty to extend an invitation to the whole Church to make every effort for ensuring that the structures of Catholic schools remain effective; responsibility for this should particularly be taken by Bishops, priests and above all by those well-deserving religious Congregations, both male and female, which came into being with the charism of education by the Saints who founded them. These should make a full commitment to maintaining this great and incomparable service to the Church, treating it as something precious.”

(John Paul II, Speech of 28.6.1984.)

ABBREVIATIONS

- Dim. Rel.** *Dimensione religiosa della scuola cattolica*, Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 1988.
- Don Orione e la P.O.D.P.** *Don Orione e la Piccola Opera della Divina Provvidenza. Documenti e Testimonianze*, by Don Giovanni Venturelli, Rome 1969-1992, vols. I, II, III, IV, V.
- Fam. Cons.** *Familiaris Consortio*, Encyclical of John Paul II, Rome 1981.
- GE** *Gravissimum Educationis*, Declaration of the 2nd Vatican Ecumenical Council on Christian Education, Rome 1965.
- GS** *Guadium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution of the 2nd Vatican Ecumenical Council on the Church in the modern world, Rome 1965.
- Il Laico** *Il Laico cattolico testimone della fede nella scuola*, Congregazione per l'educazione cattolica, Rome 1982.
- Lett. I** Don LUIGI ORIONE, *Lettere*, vol. I, Postulation of the Little Work of Divine Providence, Rome 1969.
- Lett. 2** Don LUIGI ORIONE, *Lettere*, vol. II, Postulation of the Little Work of Divine Providence, Rome 1969.
- LG** *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution of the 2nd Vatican Ecumenical Council on the Church, Rome 1964.
- Puebla** *Documento finale*, 3rd General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, Puebla 1979.
- RM** *Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical of John Paul II, Rome 1980.
- Santo Domingo** *Documento finale*, 4th General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, Santo Domingo 1992.
- Sc. Catt. Italia** *La scuola cattolica oggi in Italia*, Italian Episcopal Conference, Rome 1983.
- Sc. Catt.** *La scuola cattolica*, Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 1977.

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INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the “Orionine Educational Plan” that was drawn up recently in Santiago de Chile and which has now been published after suitable revision. This is not merely an examination of a “private” kind, carried out by a specialist, but rather a reflection of the thoughts of the whole Congregation.

Let me explain.

A school: the first work

We have just celebrated, on 15 October last, the centenary of the Foundation of the Congregation which started with the famous little school of San Bernardino. After the closure of the oratory, the seminarian Orione did not give up. He deeply felt the need to close the gap that was opening up between the Church and the people. So he began with a school. During this first stage the full influence of the three years spent with Don Bosco can be clearly seen. It is not surprising, then, that he started with young people, as he was still young himself. With time, though, his plans became more clearly defined and expanded in an irrepressible manner.

All the works: a school

San Bernardino was just the beginning. Consumed by a great fire (“*I feel the need to travel the earth and all the seas,*”) his ideas were welling up inside him; he wanted to encompass everything and everyone.

Alongside the school he placed his charitable works. But there is no separateness here. They formed one sole educational project. The school, in fact, is the initial charitable work since it offers at one and the same time an education of the conscience and an opportunity to take one’s place in society with dignity. Education of the youth is the highest service that can be performed for a people.

Schools and charitable works are thus founded, contained within one plan for education to solidarity. If “a school is always a great work of charity,” it is also true that “a work of charity is always a great school.”

Don Orione the educator

Our Founder was not just content to open schools just about everywhere. He himself became the great educator and father of the Congregation and was ever-present by means of countless journeys and thousands of letters. Some of these were explicitly “teaching letters,” setting a standard. Don Orione intended to give permanent directions through them to his sons.

One famous letter of his was written from Victoria (Buenos Aires) on 21 February 1922 and addressed to his sons in the “San Geraldo” College of Mar de Hespanha in Brazil (Lett. I, 353-392).

No less well-known is the letter from Tortona of 5 August 1920, addressed to Don Pensa who was in charge of the Venice schools. (Lett. I, 237-252). We also have that most famous letter of 3 July 1936 concerning the Sunday school (Lett. II, 365-374). But these are

not the only ones. It would seem that Don Orione, hopping from continent to continent, wrote ceaselessly to his sons, issuing his directives and enlivening his educational undertakings.

His main concerns, as we can see, were not aesthetic but practical, solid and sound ones:

*“Our system, which we will call **Paternal-Christian.**”* Similarly, on the next page he speaks of *“establishing and using our new system of education, **the Paternal-Christian system,**”* (Lett. I, 377-378).

“Do not destroy it, then, (this letter) as I will want to look at it again so as to take from it what is superfluous and add in what is lacking. Take it for now in its spirit and its meaning rather than in its form” (Lett. I, 368).

The “unfinished work”

It is wonderful to consider the action of a Founder as an **“unfinished work”**.

Don Orione did not have the time to organise his teaching ideas into a complete system, but his life was an on-going source of orientation and examples. The Congregation has retained this treasure-house from the beginning. There have been numerous examples from individual confreres. During the last ten to fifteen years there has been a greater awareness of the need to imitate the teaching style of the Founder more closely, especially where the passing on of our spirit to the laity is concerned.

Don Orione, in fact, almost exclusively wrote with his religious in mind. As the congregation has become more widespread, our educational institutions have passed almost completely into the hands of lay people. This is due not only to a lack of religious, but also because in some countries the state has not prevented the development of private schools.

Our responsibility

We have a great responsibility, that goes without saying! This has now become clear because in recent years the urgency for knowledge and greater study of our educational methods has grown. It would be a sign of decline and serene carelessness if we were to manage forty thousand students without considering the question of our methods and style and of whether we have something original to say in education, even though we are not a congregation specialised exclusively in schooling.

This idea came about almost spontaneously through our normal work. It arose from our religious who were working in schools and from teachers who asked us for a “justification of our faith.” Nowadays lay teachers are in a majority everywhere. Religious, partly through lack of numbers – as we have already said – but also through an increased respect for the mission of the laity in the Church, have had the courage to delegate. They have delegated many things, but not the responsibility for the soul of the Catholic Orionine school.

Thus some lay people, who have suddenly found themselves managing our schools, have requested formation. We have all thrown ourselves into the task with a form of working

that is more spontaneous or systematic, according to the situation. Some Provinces started several years ago in response to the needs of their own environment; others are now reorganising. As far back as 1989 at Esteves de Valença in Brazil there was a meeting of educators – on a Latin American level – led by the General Councillor in charge, Don Gemma (he is now Bishop of Isernia).

The Orionine Educational Plan

This path of reflection has been ongoing, reaching its climax in the year 92-93. The 10th General Chapter, in fact, desired an Orionine Educational Plan to be drawn up, in order to bring together and complete the different experiments that were already underway, thus involving the numerous educational and training instances in the Provinces (Cf XCG, 90). The final push came from the Chapter, with everything else following on from that.

Fr. Julio Cuesta, the General Councillor in charge of schools, has put forward a systematic study involving the Provincial Secretariats. The final objective of this would be the drawing up of the “**Orionine Educational Plan**”, as requested by the 10th General Chapter.

Successive meetings of teachers, both lay and religious, at local, regional and provincial levels, have marked out the stages of a journey that has not been easy.

Work progressed by using a “starting grid” (thematic index) and by accepting, for obvious reasons, the de facto division into two large geographical areas: Europe and Latin America.

In July 1993 there was a meeting at Cesuna (VI), Italy, of the religious and lay representatives charged with defining the European proposal to be taken to Chile. The same applied at La Floresta, Uruguay, for the Latin American proposal.

Finally, at Malloco near Santiago de Chile, the plenary meeting of the General Secretariat, with representatives from America and Europe, was held for the purposes of drawing up the “Orionine Educational Plan”. The date had deliberately been chosen to coincide with the Centenary of the first school of San Bernardino: from 15 to 20 October 1993. Around seventy religious (among whom were some of our nuns) and lay teachers and managers of our schools took part.

It is worthwhile to remember that the “Orionine Educational Plan” took its inspiration from the latest documents of the Church concerning the scholastic world. These are some of them: *Declaration on Christian education* (Vatican II, 1965); *Religious dimension of education in Catholic schools* (Congregation for Catholic education, 1988); *The lay Catholic, a witness to the faith in the school* (Congregation for Catholic education, 1982); *The Catholic school* (Congregation for Catholic education, 1977).

The work that is now offered, after a few editorial alterations, is the result of a long process of preparation and much experience, reflection and prayer. Basically we have done nothing other than what Don Orione wanted to do: “*Do not destroy these letters as I will want to look at them again.*” Orionines have been called to continue with his “unfinished work.”

To try to speak as the Founder did is a great risk, but it is also a duty! The 10th General Chapter actually challenged us to do this: “To be the Founder today.”

I am happy to hand the **Orionine Educational Plan** over to you, knowing that it provides all educators with a valuable help towards fulfilling their mission.

It will be even more interesting the more we learn to study, research and live its content while we listen to Don Orione.

Ave Maria and onwards!

Rome, 15 October 1994.

Fr. Roberto Simionato
Superior General

1. THE SCHOOL IN DON ORIONE'S PLAN FOR "RENEWING MANKIND AND SOCIETY IN CHRIST"

I. "Restoring all things in Christ"¹

1. "*Restoring all things in Christ!*" is our motto and programme. With Divine assistance and following the orders of the Church we must strive to renew everyone in the love of God,"² wrote Don Orione in 1934. In a much older document (11.2.1903) he submitted the programme of the developing Congregation to his Bishop in the following words: "To enlighten and sanctify souls in the knowledge and love of God and subsequently to restore all institutions and all things, including those belonging to the external society of mankind, in Our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified, bringing them into the spirit and life of Catholicism (...), so that they may bring a perfect order into human society and attain to Divine glory, uniting all humanity in one body, the Holy Catholic Church."³

2. **The school**, for Don Orione, is **one of the most efficient means** of achieving the primary and specific purpose of his work, which "integrates us in the salvific plan of God the Father, in Christ through the Holy Spirit."⁴

3. This purpose consists in spreading "the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, the Church and the Pope, especially among ordinary people. It strives to attract and unite with a most tender and close bond of the whole mind and heart, all the children of the people and the working classes to the Apostolic See, where, in the words of Chrisologus, *Blessed Peter lives, presides and gives the truth to whoever asks for it*. It does this by means of an apostolate of charity among the humble and poor **through such institutions and works of spiritual and corporal mercy as are most suited to the Christian education and formation of needy young people** and people in general. Its aim is to cooperate with humility, at the feet of the Apostolic See and of the Bishops, to renew and unite in Jesus Christ Our Lord, mankind and society, by bringing the heart of the most abandoned children, the poor and the working classes to the Church and to the Pope, *in order to restore all things in Christ, so that there may be one flock and one shepherd.*"⁵

II. Jesus Christ the supreme yearning of mankind

4. It is **within human history**, made up of progress and decline, of holiness and sin, that **Jesus Christ**, the Word incarnate, the Son of God made man, **has become present**. This is a gift of the merciful Providence of the Father for the salvation of mankind from sin and death.

In Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life,⁶ **man reaches the pinnacle of his dignity** and finds the perfect model for the whole man and for all that is truly human.⁷

¹ Eph 1:10

² Lett. II. 140

³ Lett. I. 14

⁴ Constitutions of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity, Art. 1.

⁵ Constitutions of the Sons of Divine Providence, Art. 5.

⁶ Cf Jn 14:6

⁷ Cf Sc Catt. 35

III. The Church, the family of God

5. This **animating and transforming presence of Christ, the Church and the Christian in the world**, is not a position of power, but of service. What is involved is a complete ferment of desire for conversion, humility, realism, perseverance and patience, marked out so permanently by the Cross, but animated by the Spirit and the certainty of Christ's final victory. He will conquer with infinite mercy when He appears "bearing in His heart the Church and in His hands the tears and blood of the poor: the cause of the afflicted, the oppressed, the widows, the orphans, the humble and the rejected."⁸ Thus the communion of men and women, among themselves and with the Father, will be realised definitively in Christ and a new heaven and a new earth of great and universal charity will be established.⁹

6. From the very beginning **God's plan has been to form all of humanity into one family according to the model of the Trinity**¹⁰: a family without individualistic exclusiveness, without hatred or divisions, in which coming together, dialogue, mutual service, life in community and communion of the spirit are the norm.

IV. Belonging to the Church

7. Since "times are racing ahead and have more than a little changed" – as Don Orione wrote in 1920 – a new pastoral priority is appearing on the horizon. We must now remove "**the gulf that is forming between the people and God, between the people and the Church.**" We have to walk, "in everything that does not go against doctrine, the Christian life and the life of the Church (...), at the forefront of the times, not at the rear and not allowing ourselves to be dragged along. In order to draw and bring the people and the youth to the Church and to Christ we must walk right at the front."¹¹

8. The new, urgent pastoral priority that permeated the whole of Don Orione's activities is now recognised and explicitly indicated in the programmes of the Magisterium, especially since the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. Symptomatic of this is the fact that, in the more recent documents, the stress falls continuously on the **new evangelisation**¹² and on the **mission of the Church to serve mankind in its totality**.¹³

9. For us there must be a correlation between the teaching of the Church and the spirit of the Congregation, because – as Don Orione said – "**without this filial love of the Church and the Roman Pontiff any attempt at a healthy renewal of the life of young people and society will be in vain**"¹⁴ since "the Pope is our belief."

10. Don Orione knew that the task was difficult and that the times were complex and volatile. He therefore proceeded along his path buoyed up only by a **great trust in Divine Providence**: "My dear sons in Jesus Christ, I see an entire past that is falling, although not all has yet fallen. The foundations of the old social structure have been undermined. A terrible *shock* will change the face of the earth, perhaps very soon. What will emerge from

⁸ Lett. II. 337

⁹ Cf Lett. II. 338

¹⁰ Cf LG. 9; Puebla, 235, 238 ff.

¹¹ Lett. I. 251

¹² RM 33ff

¹³ GS 1-4

¹⁴ Lett. I. 96

such destruction? We are Sons of Divine Providence and *we do not despair*. On the contrary, we have great trust in God! We are not those purveyors of doom who believe that the world will end tomorrow. Corruption and moral sickness are widespread, it is true, but I hold and firmly believe that the final victor will be God; and God will conquer in infinite mercy. God has always conquered in this way!”¹⁵

11. In order to bring mankind and society to Christ, Don Orione **used the means that the Church’s tradition placed at his disposal.**

Formed in the school of Don Bosco and Cottolengo, he initiated numerous undertakings both in the field of education and in that of charity. He always recognised and recalled with sacred veneration the influence of the two great Masters: “In all the arrangements I made, in all matters, I always bore Don Bosco and Cottolengo in mind.”¹⁶

V. Education for renewing mankind

12. Since his time spent with Don Bosco in the Valdocco oratory in Turin,¹⁷ Don Orione nurtured the conviction that would remain with him for the rest of his life: “**The salvation of all the youth of the world... will come through Sunday religious instruction and the School.**”¹⁸

13. A result of this conviction, and despite the fact that Luigi Orione was still a young seminarian, was that **on 15 October 1893**, with the blessing of the Bishop of Tortona, Mgr. Bandi, **the first educational establishment** of the young Congregation **came to life**. Within a few years many more would come about, both in Italy and in other parts of the world.

14. Through his schools Don Orione went on with his purpose of contributing to the betterment of mankind and society. He therefore dedicated himself to a careful training of young people, especially those who were most needy, in order to assist them in **taking their place in a dignified manner in the world of work and the Church and in becoming champions of civil and Christian progress.**¹⁹ He strove to develop in them strong personalities, capable of discerning their own lay or religious vocation without compromise or hesitation.²⁰

VI. A distinct system of education

15. Education and formation of the youth were therefore Don Orione’s first, and for a long time principal, field of action. He soon realised that, in order to achieve the objective of *humbly cooperating in renewing and reuniting humanity in Christ under the direction of the*

¹⁵ Lett. II. 369

¹⁶ Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. I. 350

¹⁷ From 4 October 1886 to 16 August 1889 (from age 16 to 19)

¹⁸ Lett. II. 370

¹⁹ “Strive so that the young people may understand that they must progress every day and in every way; that every day they may feel they know a little more about life and that they have become better, morally, civilly and in a Christian manner.” Lett. I. 370

²⁰ “We have given many worthy elements to society that it may be renewed in a Christian and Catholic manner.” Lett. I. 383ff

“We want to make the young people good and turn them into heralds of faith and goodness and of moral and civil progress for society.” Lett. I. 356

*Roman Pontiff*²¹ he **needed a distinct and appropriate educational system** for the formation of Christian people who would be capable of carrying out this mission in the world with generosity and strength of mind.²²

16. Thus inspired by the main features of Catholic teaching and, more particularly, the **preventive system** that was followed and completed by his great master Don Bosco, he laid the foundations of his own distinctive educational style, which he called the “**Paternal-Christian method.**” Statements about this pinpoint first one aspect, then another, but they all end up by focussing on the basic course that he set out in 1896 in a letter to his friend Don Vincenzo Guido: “Our aim is to form honest, upright Christians.”²³

17. In various articles in the official bulletin of the Congregation “*L’Opera della Divina Provvidenza,*” Don Orione, addressing his first helpers and the parents of the pupils, extols the beauty and urgency of **Christian** education. In order to succeed in this – he wrote – it is essential that **religion takes pride of place in the school** and in the house: teaching, discipline and even recreation! Religion is not to be merely a course of lessons or an exercise to be fitted into a certain time framework: it is a faith and a law that must make itself felt constantly and everywhere. It must exercise its natural action over our entire lives.”²⁴

18. Emphasising the paternal aspect of his educational method, Don Orione explains: “The school *must be a family*, a moral, well disciplined family. It should be run with great affection in the Lord and with much care. Every so often a note of feeling and kind-heartedness should be struck so that you may raise yourselves and your pupils up to God: that is how to educate.”²⁵

19. “The basis of the system should not just be *reason* and *kindness*, but also the practice of *faith* and the *Catholic religion*. There must be the breath of the soul and heart of an educator who truly loves God and causes Him to be loved, sweetly, while teaching the young people the ways of the Lord. **The educator must always speak the language of truth with reasoning, kindness and faith.**”²⁶ Then, with a little more emphasis on the Christian aspect of his message, he adds: “*We will have done nothing until we have Christianised the youth again in their soul of faith and in their lives, both private and public, until we have Christianised the consciences and characters of our pupils.*”²⁷

VII. Orionine spirituality

20. In this perspective of service to society and the Church, **our schools must, through their own mission, form their pupils to those values** that the Founder personified and disseminated with such passion and conviction:

- trust in Divine Providence;²⁸

²¹ Cf Constitutions of the Sons of Divine Providence, Art. 5

²² Cf Lett. I. 358-359

²³ Scr 35. 15

²⁴ Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. III. 522.

²⁵ Lett. I. 355

²⁶ Lett. I. 360

²⁷ Lett. I. 359

²⁸ “The Sons of Divine Providence, as a special feature of their teaching, must ensure that God and God’s Providence stand out everywhere. We must make Divine Providence – *‘that penetrates and shines out through the universe,*” as Dante would have said – shine out and be seen everywhere.” Lett. I. 362ff

- faith in Christ, the true liberator and saviour of man and nations;²⁹
- active participation in the mission of the Church, who continues the work of Christ and is the mother of believers;³⁰
- love of and faithfulness to the Pope, our universal spiritual guide;³¹
- charity, the soul of Christ's kingdom;³²
- commitment in favour of the humble, the marginalised and the suffering of all types;
- honesty, professionalism and industriousness;
- open Catholic character; fidelity to the Magisterium;
- love for the Word of God;
- love of the Cross;³³
- devotion to the Mother of God;³⁴
- piety³⁵ and purity;³⁶
- the sacramental and liturgical life;³⁷
- a social and ecclesial commitment to the civil and religious progress of humanity.³⁸

21. These values may be summed up under the **four great loves of Don Orione** which all symbolise and embody them: *Jesus, Mary, Pope, Souls*.

1. **Jesus:** "He alone is the living spring of faith and charity that can restore and renew mankind and society. Only Christ can form one heart and one soul out of all the peoples, uniting them all in one Fold under the guidance of one Shepherd."³⁹

2. **Mary:** "whom we all venerate and proclaim... Our Mother and sole foundress of the Little Work. We look upon her as the heavenly inspiration of all our activities... It is through devotion to Mary that our beloved Congregation is becoming established further and further across the world."⁴⁰

3. **Pope-Church:** "The Church is the true Mother of our faith and our souls, of the most vital, spiritual and eternal part of ourselves; and the Pope is the Vicar of Jesus Christ our

²⁹ "It is faith, above all, and the charity of Jesus Christ that must rebuild the world." Lett. I. 360

³⁰ Formation must lead the youth "to God and the love of the Holy Church of God, our great and sacred love." Lett. I. 363

³¹ "Just as we do not do our duty if we do no more than our bare duty, so must we also be *more than Christians*, we must be Catholic and Papal *in order to be true Christians*." Lett. I. 389

³² "The evangelical principle of charity, universal charity, is that kind which, when diffused and preached, can bring true peace into the world, and not only peace but everything that is good." Lett. I. 248

³³ "Educate the youth to the need for, as well as the joys of, *suffering*: the path of life is sown with tears." Lett. I. 369

"Without strength of mind, without sacrifice and without suffering, without the cross, *there is no virtue*. The cross, whether in algebra, politics or religion, is the sign of the positive. God and our neighbour are loved on the cross! *God and our neighbour are loved and served on the cross! A great truth!*" Lett. I. 367.

³⁴ "You will do so much good for the souls of the young ones if you light the lamp of love of Our Blessed Lady in their hearts!" Lett. I. 391

³⁵ "Everything in us, as in the young people, (...) must be subordinate to *solid piety*, i.e. to the love of God, to Christian virtues, to true holiness." Lett. I. 387ff

³⁶ "*The prime basis* of civil life and any healthy education is *morality* and honesty of habits, not only for us Catholics but for all people, wherever they are." Lett. I. 375

³⁷ "Confession and Holy Communion must be encouraged *most frequently* to our young people." Lett. I. 387.

³⁸ Cf. Lett. I. 366, 367, 369

³⁹ Lett. II. 500

⁴⁰ Lett. II. 478

God and Redeemer. He is the “*gentle Christ on earth,*” as St. Catherine of Siena called him; he is our serene guide, our infallible Master, our true Father.”⁴¹

4. **Souls-Poor:** “*Souls and Souls!* This is our whole life; this is our cry and our programme, our whole soul and our whole heart: *Souls and Souls!*”⁴²

“Our table must be like an old Christian Agape. Souls and Souls! We must have a generous heart and the Divine madness for Souls.”

“*Charity! Charity! Charity!* Jesus, by Your Divine love, give us a great spirit of charity for souls, especially for the children of the poor and for the unhappy and abandoned poor. You know this, Lord: we are Your poor and we were born for the poor.”⁴³

22. Today, with the same programme, the spiritual sons and daughters of Don Orione humbly intend to carry on his work and mission in the field of education by means of schools of different categories and levels.

Chapter 2: CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SCHOOLING

I. The Catholic school in history

23. “History is a book to be opened in order to understand the presence and **the significance of the Catholic school as an experience of the Church.** Instigating the Catholic school we find above all the saints, men and women from different centuries and with different experiences, but all united in bearing witness to and serving the importance of education through schools and all the popular forms of education. They brought the Gospel out to infants, children and young people, frequently devising means and methods with such a rich and lively wisdom that astounds us even today.”⁴⁴

24. **Freedom**, together with a **popular character**, are the marks that have typified the historic journey of the Catholic school:

* **freedom** as an arduous search for vital space in lay society, especially during the last two centuries, so as to be able to fulfill its own mission of an evangelising form of education without discrimination or marginalisation; the Catholic school has resisted the repeated attempts at marginalisation and suppression that have been made in the more or less recent past and which still happen today;

* **popular character**, through a preferential devotion to the weakest social classes, especially in certain educational activities expressly directed towards the children and younger members of less well-to-do families and to disabled minors, offering them dignified means of taking their place in society and the world of work.

25. **The charismatic movement in the field of education was shown to be very much alive in the Church** during, and especially after, the Council of Trent. Later on, the Enlightenment would force the Church into a series of struggles and demands, both in the pastoral sector and the strictly educational sector. In the 19th and 20th centuries the Church –

⁴¹ Lett. I. 249

⁴² Lett. I. 250

⁴³ Lett. II. 144

⁴⁴ From the speech of John Paul II at Santo Domingo, 12.10.1984

together with the Catholic schools – sought new ways of dialogue and cooperation with modern governments. The work of Don Bosco, centred as it was on the formation of young people, is a typical example of this. Similarly Murialdo's motto had a prophetic sound to it: **“Open a school and you will close a prison.”** Leo XIII⁴⁵ and Pius XI⁴⁶ clearly stated the right of the Church to open and run her own schools. The 2nd Ecumenical Council of the Vatican also reaffirmed and enlarged on this principle.⁴⁷

26. In Latin America the meeting of the *conquistadores* with the indigenous peoples historically brought about an evangelisation that was to be carried out in the midst of light and darkness with men of the Church who, despite everything, **implanted Christianity by means of catechesis, the sacraments, scholastic instruction and education,**⁴⁸ thus giving rise to a new culture and providing Latin America with its own spiritual identity and unity.⁴⁹

Consequent upon the independentist uprisings and the penetration here also of new ideas that were prevalent in Europe at the end of last century there were repeated attempts to marginalise the Church and break the cultural unity that had been achieved. In spite of these **the Catholic school has continued to carry out its work and mission while at times competing with and resisting liberal rationalist thought, educational secularism and the supposed cultural neutrality of the official school**⁵⁰, as well as other problems that the South American continent has been dragging along from the time of colonisation until today.

II. The face of the Catholic school

27. The Catholic school seeks to present itself as a **flexible and adequate response to the most urgent requests for a complete form of education that arise from the ecclesial community, the families and the world of youth.** It is constantly seeking solutions in concrete terms in civil and ecclesial life and has the capability to put itself forward as a **model** based on how it is identified, i.e. its own **educational plan**, either in relation to schools in general or in relation to the Christian community. It is a school that not only respects the epistemological disciplinary structure but also highlights service to mankind, providing people with an increasingly better knowledge and responsibility in the world.

28. The Holy Father has emphasised its character: “It is only right to recognise above all that the prime duty of the Catholic school is to be a school, i.e. **a place of culture and education**, of culture for the purposes of education.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ Cf Encyclicals “*Cognita nobis*” and “*Militantis Ecclesiae*”

⁴⁶ Cf Encyclical “*Divini Illius Magistri*”

⁴⁷ *G E.* 8

⁴⁸ Puebla, 9: “The evangelising work of the Church in Latin America is the result of the wholehearted missionary effort of the entire people of God. We can find countless undertakings in the charitable, welfare, and educational fields and, as shining examples, the original combination of evangelisation and human promotion in the Franciscan, Augustinian, Dominican, Jesuit and Mercy missions, among others.”

⁴⁹ Cf Puebla, 412

⁵⁰ Cf Argentine Episcopal Conference, *Iglesia y Comunidad Nacional*, Nos. 16-23. In particular, at No. 22, we read: “In the field of education secularism erroneously sought to free the officially imparted culture from its religious roots and from the tradition that had been defended and maintained by many ‘*Liberators*’ (San Martin, Belgrano. etc.). With education positively excluding religion, even the natural kind, the end result is to uproot culture from every religious option, itself a determining basis for all other options. What is worse is that a division is created between popular culture, which is religious, and the supposed neutral culture of the official school.”

⁵¹ John Paul II, *Speech of 23.11.1991*

29. The Catholic school, as it goes through a **phase of intense transition, is with increasing clarity assuming the role of the school of the Christian community**, open to whoever freely intends to choose it. Thus the educators – teachers, religious and lay, parents – are committed to offer the pupils a community-based educational environment, one which is animated by the evangelical spirit of freedom and charity,⁵² which allows young people to assimilate the human and Christian values of which they will subsequently become the exponents and witnesses in civil and ecclesial society.

30. The Catholic school, a living part of the Church, thus puts itself forward as a **“systematic and critical laboratory of culture,”**⁵³ with the capacity to offer life orientations. This is a very necessary service in today’s complex situation, one which was moreover foreseen by Don Orione when he spoke of the “great transformation” that “will soon change the face of the earth.”⁵⁴ Today the elements tending to break up God’s plan have certainly become intensified, but there are also new openings giving rise to hope for those working to make society more human and Christian.

31. The Catholic school is therefore designed as an **institutional innovation**, a house of individuals and community, a place of identity and dialogue, authority and corresponsibility.

III. Mission and function of the Catholic school

32. **“The Catholic school is a part of the salvific mission of the Church.** It accomplishes this within a close union of the proclamation of the faith and the promotion of the person. (...) The Catholic school participates in the pastoral mission of the Church by means of the educational service for which it is suitable.”⁵⁵

33. Because of its ecclesial character the Catholic school must operate within its specific sector and territory in tune with the great plans and life of the whole Church, in a close relationship and harmony with the pastors, communities and movements in which the one people of God expresses itself. **The justifications for the Catholic school, in fact, become obvious first of all within the Church**, who in time and under the guidance of the Pope and the Bishops deepens the knowledge of the mystery of God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, while at the same time pointing out the ways of service to mankind.

34. **Proclamation of the Gospel to mankind is the fundamental and necessary mission of the Church.** It is the key that reveals her essence and actions, today as in the past, highlighting the fact that she does not exist for herself but for the Kingdom. As guide of truth and expert in humanity, the Church is called to serve the world, so as to protect it from confusion of the mind and heart.

35. For the Catholic school, therefore, there is no need to invent different or independent paths. It is just a question of following – with the specific nature and originality of its educational remit – those undertaken by the Church. In this way it can truly be said that **the Catholic school takes part in the diakonia of the Kingdom.**

⁵² *GE 8; Dim. Rel. 25*

⁵³ *Cf Sc. Catt. 23, 36*

⁵⁴ *Lett. II. 369*

⁵⁵ *Sc. Catt. Italia. 11. 69*

36. This diakonia, or service to the world with the Kingdom in sight, is apparent in the school environment in the form of evangelisation and witness of charity. This is because we are dealing with an action that has God as its source, mankind as its recipient and the Kingdom as its objective. A challenge therefore exists for the Catholic school also in these ecclesial orientations: an examination of its own identity and actions within the Church's mission. Thus, in the ecclesial requirement for the **new evangelisation, the educational function becomes fundamental, as a service of the truth in charity.**

37. The Catholic school is entrusted with dialogue with today's culture, borne down as it is with contradictions and imbued with secularism, but which still expresses, albeit in paradoxical and unusual forms, a longing for the Absolute and for religious feeling. An urgent need therefore exists for an intelligent and ongoing commitment to a new inculturation of the Gospel. The Catholic school **can help today's world to understand its own centrality and priority** in the face of all kinds of progress, technology, economics and social evolution.

38. To this belongs the task of **gradually preparing the young people to take their place in society in a mature, adult and responsible manner** by means of education in general, spiritual formation and the professional training they have chosen, bearing in mind their personal gifts and inclinations and the requirements of the community. Going against modern tendencies, which give pride of place to what is useful and functional for material and technical progress, this formation necessitates a careful cultivation of intellectual, creative and aesthetic capabilities, the development of the capacity for judgement, the promotion of a sense of values, the backing of right attitudes and corresponding behaviour, access to the cultural heritage⁵⁶ acquired by previous generations and formation to dialogue and understanding in human relations.

IV. View of life

39. The Catholic school must compare its own educational plan - "*ideario*"⁵⁷ ("*ideology*"), programmes, content, methods – with the concept of life that inspires it and with the environment in which it is situated. This implies a hierarchy of values on the basis of which it takes on and interprets the entire cultural heritage. Among the different cultural dimensions, **the ethical and religious ones** occupy a decisive position due to their capacity for reinvigorating the spirit and for forming strong and responsible personalities, capable of free and right options and able to compare the possible depersonalising and standardising effects of a society that gives preference to scientific and technological development and which imposes fashions and ideals with the power of the mass media.

40. The Catholic Orionine school is characterised by the Christian concept of life, that is, by **the salvific plan which has Christ as its centre and the Pope as guide in time.** This concept of life plays the unifying and life-giving role of the person and of society, as well as of culture and of history.

⁵⁶ Cf Sc. Catt. 26

⁵⁷ "*Ideario*" is not a word that exists in the general vocabulary of today. It is rather a neologism of Spanish origin, meaning an ensemble of orientations, values and general and global references which are used as the final "*inspiration*" for an educational or pastoral action.

V. Summarising

41. The Catholic school has throughout the centuries been an essential part of the Church's educational plan. Consequently **the conscience of the Church is apparent** in it also during the different ages.

42. Forces, including problematic ones, that the Catholic school undergoes and suffers today, can be understood and resolved if they are looked at in the framework of the experience that the Church as a whole is undergoing at this present time, **displaying her passion for mankind and its problems**, even in areas at risk and in regions marked by social, cultural and religious fragility.

43. In such social and cultural contexts the primacy of evangelisation requires not only attention to and concern for the axiological aspects, but also, and with equal commitment, the technical and professional ones. For this reason **the quality of education** to be imparted and **the type of man or woman** to be formed must be looked at closely. **Prioritised attention** must therefore be given **to the formation of all those who work in the educational process**, particularly teachers and consequently to teaching innovations and to professional orientation. For this purpose a shared form of planning will be required, together with proposals for educational itineraries aimed at the maturity of the complete person so as to achieve an appropriate balance between faith, culture and life.

44. Of particular importance is the need for the **will to participate in the diocesan pastoral plans**. The Christian community must take on, as its own responsibility, the Catholic school. The latter, in turn, must look again at its method of carrying out the apostolate.

45. Don Orione's desire to do everything in the Church and with the Church will thus find the possibility of manifesting and expressing itself fully in its educational activities.

Chapter 3: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORIONINE SCHOOL

I. The teaching and institutional heritage of Don Orione

46. In the light of the recent Church directives and in harmony with the charism of the Founder

The period in which the example and word of the Founder and his first followers indicated paths and resolved doubts is now over. In the meantime the Second Vatican Council and the Holy See have accentuated the importance of the pastoral action of the Church in the field of education. It is consequently ever more urgent now **to clarify Don Orione's educational plan and to make a deeper study of his charism**. Thus, on the one hand we have to achieve a better understanding of **the reasoning that guided the Founder** in opening schools, while on the other we must highlight with greater clarity **the basic features** with which he marked them. This work must not fail to take into consideration the experience of the Congregation on the subject and the internal norms currently in force,

which have been enriched in their fundamental points by the principles, directives and orientations of the recent Magisterium of the Church.

47. Multiplication and diversification of the houses

Starting out from the intuition of the Founder and the first boarding schools, the action of the Congregation in the sphere of education has become diversified and enlarged. The Congregation now has schools in areas both rural and urban and embraces training of both the classical and technical kind, **covering the whole domain of education, from kindergarten, elementary and middle school right up to high school and vocational school, catering also for underprivileged students.**

48. Safeguarding the youth and Catholic-Christian education

From the opening of the very first college, Don Orione made known the purpose and objectives that he was resolved to achieve: “In this city of Tortona,” he wrote in a circular letter to all the parish priests in the district on 7 September 1893, “next October we will open a Catholic Institute for **educating in the knowledge and holy fear of God** our dear young people who are the delight of the Heart of Christ. This Institute, loved and blessed by our Most Venerated Bishop, is now here as a lifeline in the midst of all the intellectual and moral perversion of our young students.”⁵⁸

The character and apostolic purpose of the educational undertakings were thus now immediately established.

A number of years later, in 1922, on the occasion of the foundation of the house at Mar de Espanha in Brazil, he once again underlined this apostolic and evangelising feature: “Especially inaugurated by us in Brazil whose *Faith* is under such attack, **our school must be a true apostolate**, and a true school for the Catholic formation of all the children who come to us. Brazil today, and nearly all of South America in general, is being assailed by Protestantism, Theosophy and Spiritualism. Sadly, many people who are weak or ignorant in the faith, have let themselves be enticed and bought. They have sold their souls for a mess of pottage, as Esau did. We must warn and protect our young people and *make use of the school* to instruct them well in Religion, so as to lead them to a practical Catholic life and to save them.”⁵⁹

II. Schools opened during the life of the Founder

49. The first house and beginning of the Congregation

“On 15 October 1893 the Congregation started with the opening of the college at San Bernardino in Tortona.”⁶⁰ By this decision Don Orione turned himself principally towards the young people, whom he used to call the “sun or storm of the future.” Since then, in a hundred years of history and enthusiastic work, numerous educational establishments for the **total advancement of young people** have opened. They have been founded either directly by Don Orione or by his spiritual sons.

50. First school in Brazil

⁵⁸ Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. II. 8

⁵⁹ Lett. I. 356

⁶⁰ Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. II. 333ff

Don Orione's love for the youth was equalled by his **missionary ardour**. Accordingly in 1914 the first religious to be sent to Brazil dedicated their efforts for the benefit of **humble and coloured boys** in the first educational venture undertaken in Latin America: the School of San Gerardo at Mar de Espanha.

51. Formation and placement of young people in the world of work

“Starting from the post-war years Don Orione attached special importance to opening schools that saw to the **religious, cultural and professional formation of young people who were about to be introduced into the realm of work, especially the industrial kind**, so that they could bring a **breath of Christian life**, serenity and love into that environment.

In the Veneto, the region that most felt the deadly consequences of the great war, Don Orione developed his activities in establishments with vocational schools that responded to the needs of new technologies in industry. The establishment founded by Don Orione had previously been directed at giving vocational training particularly to boys, sons of ordinary people who needed to learn a trade in order to earn their living honestly. With this in mind he had opened agricultural settlements, a printing works, carpenters' and shoemakers' shops. The training offered to the apprentices, however, was of the practical craft kind in use at the time, but the war had brought about an unprecedented push for an industrial scale of production, which increasingly demanded more highly skilled workers. Don Orione was careful to take this primary requirement into account, both when he was opening new schools and when he took over the running of ones that were already functioning and had been put into the hands of his Congregation.”⁶¹

52. Technical proficiency and primacy of the person being educated

In some of the institutes taken over by him on the request of the ecclesiastical authorities, the boys, “were sent after elementary school into trade apprenticeships in workshops or with craftsmen where there was no intention of educating these young workers. Their sole purpose was to use this cheap form of labour to the maximum. In order to find a remedy to this sorry situation Don Orione, with the courage and trust in Divine Providence that was his mark, started **authentic vocational schools, with precise educational programmes** in those institutes, in order to form capable workmen, as well as excellent Christians.”⁶²

“With the same aims and educational/cultural and vocational programmes he started up in Mestre on 13 June 1921 the institute named after the worthy Commendatore Pietro Berna. This was not an insignificant undertaking if we bear in mind that, in the February of that same year, on the advice of Patriarch La Fontaine, he had acquired the Emiliana print shop and book store of Venice, which had opened in 1873 for the dissemination of the Catholic press, but which was in severe economic difficulties at that time. It was important not only to prevent that worthy editorial activity from closing down, but above all to have an efficient method of **providing work, food and a career for orphans and poor children**, as he had already done in Tortona when he opened the first printing shop at the Paterno in Via Emilia.”⁶³

53. The beginnings of the Congregation in Argentina

⁶¹ A. PICCARDO, *Salviamo I giovani*, in “Messaggi di Don Orione,” Book 43. 21ff

⁶² A. PICCARDO, *ibid.* 22

⁶³ A. PICCARDO, *ibid.* 22ff

In 1921 Don Orione visited his works in South America for the first time. During a brief stay at Victoria, near Buenos Aires, he took on the pastoral care of the district and – while his religious studied Spanish with the Lazarists of Luján - personally looked after the young people, thereby starting our first oratory in Argentina. It was from Victoria that Don Orione, on 21 February 1922, sent the well-known letter on education to the religious working at Mar de Espanha.

Once Don Orione had left Latin America, his religious opened the “Holy Family” school at Mar del Plata-Puerto in 1924; in 1925 they opened the printing works and the school of arts and crafts at Victoria and subsequently, in 1926, the College of St. Joseph at Mar del Plata. These works were set in motion by Don Giuseppe Zancocchi and Don Giuseppe Dutto.⁶⁴ In both locations **they served the children of the humble: labourers and railway workers at Victoria, fishermen at Mar del Plata.** The esteem that these initiatives rapidly accomplished among the families and the young people themselves stood out in the widespread anticlerical climate that was prevalent around that time.

54. Other developments in Europe

“In 1923 the Congregation of Charity in Venice, due to grave financial difficulties, closed the Male Orphanage at Zattere and put it up for sale. This time, too, the Patriarch, so as not to deprive the City of such a beneficial institution for needy children, warmly encouraged the Work of Don Orione to acquire the Orphanage. In the April of that year Don Orione, with the help of some distinguished benefactors, purchased the vast complex of buildings of that institution and set up the “Artigianelli” institute **along some very progressive criteria.** He dedicated it to St. Jerome Emiliani, who is known as the “Father of Orphans” because of his great love for children of this kind.

From the very beginning the “Artigianelli” institute had not only modern classrooms, but also well-equipped laboratories meeting the requirements of an authentic vocational school for mechanics, carpenters and the various associated specialist trades. Later the whole of the Emiliana Printing Works, formerly situated at San Giacomo dell’Orto, together with its different production departments for developing vocational training in the printing and editorial fields, was transferred there.”⁶⁵

“That same year (1923) Don Orione took on the management of the Camerini-Rossi Institute in Padua which had been disrupted by the events of the war and was no longer able to continue with its charitable work for needy children. Here, too, vocational schools were immediately set in motion and the relevant workshops and laboratories installed from scratch.”⁶⁶

“During that same time Don Orione initiated two important scholastic centres: one in Tortona and the other in Novi Ligure (Alessandria). Near the Mother House in Tortona, as well as the Paterno School, the first vocational schools had been running since 1910. (...) In 1921, (...) he opened the “Dante Alighieri” college in Tortona which included classes for cultural and technical education for the lower and upper middle grades;”⁶⁷ and “at Novi Ligure, in 1924, he purchased and reopened the ‘Collegio San Giorgio’ which the Somascan

⁶⁴ Cf Don Orione’s letter to Don Zancocchi on 22. 9.1924: “I am pleased about all your undertakings and all the good that you are doing.”

⁶⁵ A. PICCARDO, *ibid.* 23

⁶⁶ A. PICCARDO, *ibid.* 23-24

⁶⁷ A. PICCARDO, *ibid.* 24-25

Fathers had founded in 1649 and administered until the end of the 19th century. Here he set up first and second grade vocational classes in technical subjects.”⁶⁸

55. The beginnings in Uruguay and further developments in Latin America

In February 1929, in accord with the wishes of the Archbishop, the Congregation’s first educational establishment in Uruguay opened in Montevideo: “El Patronato de Obreros.” The school was later organised as a boarding school, printing works and printing school, catering solely to boys who were particularly needy and providing them with printing qualifications.

Meanwhile, from 26 March 1926 onwards, the “Divina Providencia” Art and Crafts institute of Rio de Janeiro, had begun to take shape. It comprised a boarding school for orphans, an elementary school, and training in printing and carpentry.

In 1934 Don Orione made his second visit to Latin America. This time he started up the “Little Cottolengos,” although without ceasing to encourage missionary activity, the pastoral ministry and education through schools of different types. He took on the “Colegio Boneo” in Rosario and personally inaugurated the institutes of “José Manuel de Estrada” in Mar del Plata and “St. Martin of Tours” in San Fernando.

In 1936 Don Orione went to Chile where he received a donation of land on which, in 1943, some time after his death, the first Chilean college was to be established.

56. Other schools in Italy

“He returned to Italy in 1937. In Rome, on 16 October 1938, he was delighted to inaugurate the “St. Philip Neri” institute with Elementary and lower and upper Middle School classes. (...) That same year in Alessandria he inaugurated a vast modern Institute with classes and workshops for cultural and vocational education.”⁶⁹

III. An educating and evangelising presence for the advancement of the people

57. “In an era of positivism, worldly greed and money,” wrote Don Orione while summarising the motivations that guided him in the establishments he founded, “the Little Work of Divine Providence therefore proposes, under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, to dry many tears, to raise minds and hearts to that Good which is not of this world, which alone can fill and satisfy the hearts of mankind, and to modestly cooperate, with great humility and kneeling at the feet of Rome, in keeping the people faithful or bringing them back to the Church and our Homeland and to save the little ones, the humble, the most threatened or most suffering of our brothers in Christ,”⁷⁰ **by means of “the education of the youth (...), the evangelisation of the humble according to Christian social principles (...) and any other institution for the benefit of the people.”**⁷¹

58. A hundred years after the opening of the first college at San Bernardino, the Congregation of Don Orione continues, with renewed fidelity to the charism and to the Church, its providential and fruitful educational work with numerous schools, vocational centres and technical institutes spread over different Continents.

⁶⁸ A. PICCARDO, *ibid.* 25

⁶⁹ A. PICCARDO, *ibid.* 25 and 26

⁷⁰ G. PAPASOGLI, *Vita di Don Orione*, Rome 1974, p. 540

⁷¹ Lett. I. 16

59. Don Orione's personal action in the educational field – as retraced in this brief historical review – highlights his great commitment to **the raising up and evangelisation of the poor and the people**. His trademark is concern for providing the youth with a sound Christian formation and a meaningful professional qualification for playing a dignified part in society. In closing, the typical features of his establishments are already clearly visible: **their popular and evangelising character, markedly Catholic, and the overriding care for the human, professional and spiritual growth of each pupil**.

Chapter 4: THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL IN THE FACE OF THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY'S WORLD

I. The general situation

60. *The current great transformation*

We can say that the **great transformation of the world**, of which Don Orione spoke,⁷² has now come about. The elements tending towards the breakdown of God's plan have become highly accentuated, it is true, but other circumstances, hitherto un hoped for, have opened out for the Church new ways of preaching the Gospel.⁷³

At the threshold of the third millennium the ecclesial community with all its institutions must not fail to take note of these.

61. *Persistence and irrelevance of the faith in life and culture*

It is not difficult to note that closing in on oneself leads man to **egocentricity, which marginalises the faith** in transcendency,⁷⁴ and takes the other person into consideration only when a useful opportunity is offered. This creates a culture that is no longer orientated towards man as a social being, but rather towards mankind saturated with worldly goods.

The process of **secularisation** has taken over large sectors of social life in most countries. Often this degenerates into a manifest secularism which not only excludes God but also frequently casts a veiled and implicit form of contempt on religion and the sacred.⁷⁵ Despite this there persists among the people and in consciences a **faith in God** which is deeply rooted and which emerges, even en masse, when fundamental values giving a meaning to existence are touched upon: freedom, justice, love, universal brotherhood, transcendency. Not infrequently there is a faith in God which develops on the margins of the

⁷² Lett. II. 369

⁷³ Cf JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical "Redemptoris Missio,"* No. 3: "On the other hand, our own times offer the Church new opportunities in this field (the missions): we have witnessed the collapse of oppressive ideologies and political systems; the opening of frontiers and the formation of a more united world due to an increase in communications; the affirmation among peoples of the gospel values which Jesus made incarnate in his own life (peace, justice, brotherhood, concern for the needy); and a kind of soulless economic and technical development which only stimulates the search for the truth about God, about man and about the meaning of life itself."

⁷⁴ Cf Santo Domingo, 253

⁷⁵ Cf Puebla, *L'evangelizzazione nel presente e nel futuro dell'America Latina*, 83 and 434-436. The phenomenon of secularisation and secularism were dealt with extensively at Puebla. Cf also Santo Domingo 153ff.

formal structure of states and which manifests itself in various forms, both individual and collective.⁷⁶

62. Democracy, a longing for participation

We live in **an era of democracy**, which expresses a desire for participation on the part of all men insofar as they are players in history. This emphasises even more the importance of education to freedom, which is a feature and an essential good of mankind. If this is divorced from moral implications and responsibility, it can become a disruptive element.

63. The ideologies

The ideologies, however weakened they now are, continue working to determine ways of behaviour on political, economic, social and cultural levels. They remain **closed in the face of transcendence** and to a conception of man that goes beyond the limited horizons of the material and the temporal.⁷⁷

64. Science as the dominant criterion

The experimental sciences, once faith is excluded, tend to put themselves forward as **unique criteria of truth**, leaving man alone in the face of a whole series of questions on the meaning of life. These risk throwing him into an existential abyss.⁷⁸

65. Complexity and changeability of our society

Society is no longer organised around a single centre, but around a **plurality of centres that impart a precarious**, relative and partial legitimacy to social values. Such a phenomenon encourages changeability and provokes a continuous process of aggregation of centres of power, as well as cultural and political positions tending towards precarious forms of supremacy. The logic driving these movements of **aggregation and disaggregation** is that of immediate usefulness. Motives, therefore, of ideals, ethics and planning struggle to gain the upper hand over a way of life mainly oriented towards hedonism.

66. A society that is consumerist, anti-ecological and inattentive to human rights

Naturalism and the individualism arising from this lead people to favour “having” rather than “being,” to the point of creating needs in order to satisfy them.⁷⁹ The consumerism that this engenders thus displays the whole of its negative burden, which may end up compromising the balance of nature and cause many to become insensitive to the responsibilities they have towards present and future generations.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ “The religion of the Latin American peoples, in its most typical cultural form, is an expression of the Catholic faith. It is a popular form of Catholicism.” Puebla, 444-456

⁷⁷ Cf Puebla, 535-557

⁷⁸ Cf Puebla, 315

⁷⁹ Cf Puebla, 56, 62, 311, 435, 834

⁸⁰ Cf Puebla, 139, 496

The headlong rush to acquire goods as the one form of salvation brings about a self-satisfaction on the part of the few who manage to get ahead while those who do not succeed in keeping up with them, because they are poor or less gifted, are cast aside.⁸¹

67. *Sexuality detached from values*

The typical consumerist society is also accompanied by **permissiveness**, which, among other things, favours the practice of a sexual behaviour that is not linked to love, ethical and moral values, responsibility or respect of self and others.⁸²

68. *Inversion of values and obstacles to the interior life*

The inversion of values aggravates social imbalances, both on national and worldwide levels.⁸³

Pluralism, the feverish search for well-being, the intrusiveness of the mass media, the need for more than one job to survive and, above all, unemployment, tend to **destroy man's inner self as well as his sense of direction**, leading him to behaviour that is dictated by the ever-changing models in society.

69. *Sense of universality and human rights*

Today all these processes take on an aspect that is much more marked than what Don Orione experienced at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one.

There are, however, in addition to those already mentioned, also some positive elements, both in society and in the Church. These must be given due consideration.

Nowadays the need for the **organic unity of mankind** in the continuity of political, economic, technical, cultural, regional and international institutions is recognised.

In reaction to crimes against the person committed in this century there has been a strong movement in favour of respect for **human rights**.

Values such as **the dignity of the human person, justice, peace, freedom and solidarity** are gaining ever greater areas of consensus. At the same time the rigidity of ideologies and even ethical systems is tending to diminish in favour of *moral relativism* and a form of *pragmatism* that of itself forces people to neglect or renounce their own principles.⁸⁴

Consequently, in this era which is beginning to be called post-modern, we are experiencing and expressing **a lack of trust in the saving power of reason and science**. This new consciousness also gives rise to different forms of religious belief, although they may not always be totally genuine.

70. *Society and violence*

Today's society generates more violence than yesterday's. Violence has become familiar to us. **The seeds of death** are too apparent, coming as they do from the upset of the socio-political changes and the unease provoked by the crisis of growth. Society, made up of countless egos that are becoming increasingly disconnected, imposes bright images of self-centred well-being, leaving no movement or space for the desire to reach out to others or for shared creativity. Acts of violence, which are a sign of hopeless poverty, revolt and the

⁸¹ Cf Puebla, 28,1208

⁸² Cf Santo Domingo, 154, 235

⁸³ Cf Puebla, 54-58

⁸⁴ Cf Santo Domingo, 112

decomposition of our social fabric, are therefore multiplied. **Children** too rapidly and arrogantly becomes adults, with no valid educational models, without **positive reference points**. Faced with a lack of adequate public organisations for the benefit of minors, it becomes almost normal for them to slip into **widespread illegal activities**.

71. Multicultural and multireligious society

Pluralism, in the religious sphere, has brought with it a **multitude of sects and religious movements**, which proliferate particularly in the West and which generally involve an element of disturbance for the weak faith of the people. We are witnessing a phenomenon which, along with others, is actually encouraging flight or refuge into diverse religious beliefs, in which sentiment or folklore, or just the novelty, take the upper hand over theological truth and Christian authenticity.⁸⁵ At the same time the Catholic Church, particularly in the person of the Pope, has acquired a growing universal importance as a **doctrinal and moral landmark**.⁸⁶

72. Influx and manipulation of the means of social communication

The mass media, as well as performing the office of instruments at the service of communication and culture, are nowadays also becoming instruments of diffusion of less valid aspects of ways of living.

The development of communications, moreover, confers on those controlling them an immense power over culture and people's ways of thinking, feeling, living and acting. Such power is generally anonymous and impersonal. The people who control them easily avoid personal responsibility. Economic motivations, prevailing ideologies and current fashions exercise a decisive influence, perhaps even more so than that exercised by the schools, the universities and the Churches themselves.⁸⁷

II. The particular situation of education in the school environment

73. Effect of ideologies

The general tendencies described up to now acquire particular nuances in the school sector, to which the political forces alternating in power dedicate significant efforts, not only with the praiseworthy intention of extending literacy, attendance at school and professional abilities, but also with a view to directing future generations along the lines of their respective ideologies, hiding behind a presumed neutrality, which is more apparent than real. School policies occasionally remain subject to the ideologies of those in power, until the institutions and educational establishments acquire the necessary autonomy.

74. Emphasis on the scientific and utilitarian. Abandonment of religion and philosophy

The exercise of intelligence with an emphasis on what is comprehensive, scientific and technical continues to prevail in the official education systems which, on the other hand, because of the privileges they enjoy from the state, become the norm also for private schools.

⁸⁵ Cf Lett. I. 356; cf Puebla, 1102, 80, 628; cf Santo Domingo, 147

⁸⁶ Cf Santo Domingo, 20, 38, 190

⁸⁷ Mons. B. PIÑERA, *El origen de la cultura moderna*, in "Evangelizar educando," No. 27, p. 17

The predominant **technical and utilitarian** vision makes its mark on teaching organisations, aspirations and methods, thus ensuring that the school is set up mainly as a body or undertaking for pursuing occupational and professional or utilitarian ends in accordance with studies to be undertaken later. Human relations, concern for the person, environment and community participation are disregarded. Moral and religious teaching in some cases has been excluded from state schools, while in private confessional schools it does not always assume the significance and importance that it should. Teaching of philosophy, in certain scholastic tendencies in the upper middle schools, either does not exist or is reduced to the absolute minimum.⁸⁸

75. Lack of initiation in social commitments or a Catholic profile

The process of secularisation, which has still not reached the more marginalised groups, has greatly extended to a considerable number of young people who are at middle school level. These, however, have not had an adequate education to **social commitment** and participation in community life.

The Catholic schools, either through lack of vision, or manpower, or because of difficult circumstances imposed upon them by regulations and official requirements, have not always known how or been able to create a framework of human and Christian formation more in keeping with the complete development of the person and the strengthening of a strong **Catholic profile**.⁸⁹

76. Crisis of the family

The right and duty of education belongs to the family. Parents are the first educators and the family is the first school of the personal and social formation of children. Today this role is in dispute, and sometimes even compromised, by **conformism**, by the quest for what is passing, by the loss of many values and by excessive interference from the state.

Day after day the family **is progressively losing touch with its essential educating role**, either through difference of language between the young and adult generations, or because it has itself latched on to the prevailing values of modern society, or because its presence in the home is diminishing.

Even more **it has neglected to be a true educator to the faith**, especially in those social areas where the adults have abandoned the authority of the Church as a reference point for their own conduct and are leading a religious life that is formed according to their own desires.⁹⁰

77. Youth overwhelmed by information

Children and young people **are prematurely receiving information of all kinds**, thus causing the influence of the family, educators and adults to be less effective in the search for personal criteria of truth and goodness. The formation of the character to virtue and social commitment is not fully taken on board by the objectives of the school.⁹¹

III. The educational plan in the face of the challenges

⁸⁸ Cf Puebla, 1021; cf DHC 158, 136-139; Santo Domingo, 266

⁸⁹ Cf Puebla, 1019; Santo Domingo, 268

⁹⁰ Cf Puebla, 57, 94, 571ff

⁹¹ Cf Dim. Rel. 8ff

78. Because of the miscellaneous and pluralistic nature of the culture in which the young person is immersed, there is a need to draw up a precise educational plan that will take into account the irrepressible needs of human nature, the demands of the times and the teaching of the Church. It must be a plan that is capable of producing a model of a person who is truly free, responsible and formed in a Christian manner.⁹²

Chapter 5: DON ORIONE'S TEACHING STYLE

I. Towards a distinct educational style: the "Paternal-Christian" method

79. The Church, who considers education as part of her evangelising mission,⁹³ seeks in every age, as an "expert in humanity," to make adequate responses to the needs of mankind by promoting Catholic schools in particular, as these are concerned both with the complete formation of the young person and his/her participation in society according to the Christian vision of life.

80. The Catholic school must therefore concentrate on reaching the best possible level with respect to human, religious, cultural and vocational training. It must continually seek a balance between the **civil dimension**, which has "goals, methods and features that are common to all other scholastic establishments," and the **religious dimension** arising out of its association with the Church as a Christian community with "an educational plan rooted in Christ and His Gospel as its foundation."⁹⁴ What is more, the Catholic school "tends to communicate a complete culture, one that can be integrated with the Christian message."⁹⁵

81. While dealing with education in knowledge and culture an important role has to be played in the "systematic teaching"⁹⁶ of Christian doctrine as it has been handed down by the Church. In fact, "the special character and essential *raison d'être* of the Catholic school, the very reasons for which Catholic parents should give it preference, consist precisely in the quality of the religious teaching that forms part of the education of the pupils."⁹⁷

82. These principles – **a serious human, academic, scientific and technical training**⁹⁸ **combined with a solid religious formation** – guided Don Orione's actions in his work among the young people, to whose education he dedicated his initial apostolic efforts.

Inspired by the example of Don Bosco and the main features of Catholic teaching, he applied, but with **his own nuances and emphases**, the preventive method he had learned at Valdocco, calling it the "**Paternal-Christian system.**"

⁹² Cf Dim. Rel. 101ff

⁹³ Cf Sc. Catt. 9; cf Puebla, 1012-1013

⁹⁴ Dim. Rel. 67

⁹⁵ Cf Dim. Rel. 68

⁹⁶ Dim. Rel. 65

⁹⁷ Dim. Rel. 66

⁹⁸ Already in his advertising to attract applications for the first college of San Bernardino, Don Orione was careful to point out the serious nature of the curriculum: "They will receive an education that is so perfect that, at the end of our programme, they will be able, if they so wish, either to continue their studies with ease in the Seminary, or freely apply to take the exams for the high school diploma." (*Don Orione e la P.O.D.P.* Vol. II, p. 8)

83. “The basis of the system,” wrote Don Orione, “must not only be *reason and loving-kindness*, but also *faith* and the Catholic *religion* – practised – and the breath of the soul and heart of an educator who truly loves God and causes Him to be loved, gently, teaching young people the ways of the Lord. The educator must always speak the *language of truth* with reason, sincerity and faith.”⁹⁹

84. Don Orione always took inspiration from the method of **love**, which is common to all Christian teaching. He emphasised not only the principles of learning and psychology, but also those of fatherhood and the family spirit, i.e. “**the Paternal-Christian system.**”

The terms “Paternal” and “Christian” are closely connected. It is only for greater clarity that we now briefly treat them separately.

II. “Paternal”

85. “By calling his system **paternal**, Don Orione wanted first of all to indicate that the two main characters in education are to be considered father and son. The educator in a certain way embodies partly the fatherhood of God and partly the function of a father of a family. The ideal of education can therefore be pursued to the extent in which he assumes a paternal attitude towards his pupil.”¹⁰⁰

Without fatherliness there can be no kind of growth, as the educator would lack the ability to accept the pupil as he is and consequently the generosity to make a complete commitment toward developing, as far as possible, all his potentiality. Moreover, the pupil who does not feel loved would not easily come to have the psychological dispositions suitable for choosing to take part in what is put forward to him.¹⁰¹

“Fatherliness means absolute dedication, but fatherliness in the educational environment cannot be divorced from authority.”¹⁰²

86. “Perfection in ruling,” recommended Don Orione, “is contained in these five words: **Vigilance, love in the Lord, forbearance, forgiveness and feeding in the Lord.**”¹⁰³
An educator, according to Don Orione, must cultivate the following attitudes:

1. You must “be an **enemy of vice and a physician to those caught up in vice**: you must be vigilant over them, seeking out every method of giving back moral and strongly religious health to their souls. Do not be too lenient in over-readily believing (...) those who tell tales about this and that.”¹⁰⁴

2. You must “above all, correct **by the strength** of your example, and **by the gentleness** of your warnings. And if you are ever obliged to punish, *never never never* punish with sharp severity.”¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Lett. I. 360

¹⁰⁰ L. PANGRAZI, *Il metodo educativo di Don Orione*, Mestre, 1989, manuscript p. 56

¹⁰¹ Don Orione, to a pupil who asked to be readmitted to the college, wrote: “I want you to know that not everything is dead as far as you are concerned and that not everyone has forgotten you. There is someone who is able to fill your heart with holy affection as if he were your father or mother.” Don Orione, No. 60, p. 20
Cf also Lett. I. 360: “The educator must try to be loved, in a noble and saintly manner, rather than feared, but he must cause himself to be respected and loved in the Lord if he does want to be feared.”

¹⁰² L. PANGRAZI, *o.c.* p. 59

¹⁰³ Lett. II. 64

¹⁰⁴ Lett. II. 64

¹⁰⁵ Lett. II. 65

3. “Hate vice with your whole mind, but *love with the tenderest charity those who have lapsed*, as your loving-kindness will allow you to correct them and even to convert them.”¹⁰⁶

4. “We must *never* let an order come from our mouths – I do not even say the word ‘command’ – when feelings are running high.”¹⁰⁷

5. “When we are obliged to deny something that has been requested – as it is sometimes suitable or necessary to do – let it be done in such a way that the subordinate sees the pain that we feel in not being able to allow it, and that he thereby understands that it is purely the obligation of the rule and of duty, nothing else, that obliges such a refusal.”¹⁰⁸

6. “Take in hand, with **great reverence**, the souls of the youngsters who are entrusted to us, just as a good elder brother would do with his younger brothers. (...) Let us approach the boys as if they were our younger brothers *and combine gentleness, clemency and goodness with an attitude that is dignified – but not generally severe* – and conducive to gaining their goodwill.”¹⁰⁹

7. “In everything we do let us make them understand that we are concerned for *their true wellbeing*. (...) **A youngster needs to be convinced (...) that we are living for him and not for ourselves; (...) that his wellbeing is our wellbeing; that his joys are our joys**, and that his pains and sorrows are our pains and sorrows. He must also understand that we are ready to make sacrifices for him, that we would truly sacrifice ourselves for his happiness and salvation. (...) He must read into our hearts! He must have confidence in us and hear us. He will then hear God and he will hear the Church and his Homeland through us.”¹¹⁰

III. “Christian”

87. “It is essential that everything taught in the school is true; **there must be the truth that nourishes**, not drying the heart up, because it is never divorced from virtue and charity. All your teaching, therefore, must raise the minds of your pupils up to God.”¹¹¹

88. “**Do not let the young people become too enamoured of knowledge**; lead them rather through study and knowledge to give praise to the Lord from whom all gifts and all enlightenments come.”¹¹²

89. “I must warn you to be careful not to sermonise every day; *neither must the school be turned into a church*, nor the teacher’s chair into a pulpit, no! Everything, though, must be noble and holy in the school, just as in church; but never deliver sermons at school; everything in you should preach God. You must use all means to instil and spread the faith and love of God, the blessed One. Today it could be a word of explanation, tomorrow it could be a reflection, or a denunciation of an evil action by a historical figure. Oh, *when God is loved, everything will resound with God!* Always have ready a gesture or a word that will achieve more than a whole sermon!”¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Lett. II. 65

¹⁰⁷ Lett. II. 66

¹⁰⁸ Lett. II. 66

¹⁰⁹ Lett. I. 240 - 241

¹¹⁰ Lett. I. 241 - 243

¹¹¹ Letter of Don Orione (Tortona, 18.10.1939); “Messaggi di don Orione,” Book No. 64, p.7.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 7.

¹¹³ Lett. I. 363 - 364

90. What is important for Don Orione in religious formation is that **the educator must first of all be a true believer.**¹¹⁴ He is very emphatic about this: “Example! Example! Example! *Young people do not think too deeply. They follow and do what they see others do.*”¹¹⁵

91. Consistency and authenticity are, for Don Orione, the basic objectives of education and his teaching system in particular. He writes: “We must have and **develop an educational system that is wholly ours** (...), a system that will react against a milk and water Christian education, more of appearance than substance, more of formulae than of life. We want to and must educate the mind *profoundly* and educate life *in a Catholic manner*, without ambiguity: we must educate towards a Catholic life *which is not superficial*, that is, in name and not in fact, *but a practical Catholic life that is based on the Sacraments*, a life of *union with God*, of *prayer and true piety*, a life that is *lived and on fire* with virtue.”¹¹⁶

IV. Basic features of the “Paternal-Christian” educational system

92. With Don Bosco’s preventive method as his starting point, Don Orione highlights, in what he calls the **Paternal-Christian** system, the following principal features:

1. **Reason and religion**, as principles of knowledge, instruments for understanding and motives of persuasion. On these are based the communication of the Christian view of life and the formation of well-balanced personalities.¹¹⁷

2. **Form Christ in the hearts of the young people**¹¹⁸ and educate them to a **critical vision** of human events.¹¹⁹

3. **A family atmosphere**,¹²⁰ of a clear and obvious morality,¹²¹ work,¹²² sacrifice and study,¹²³ religious feeling and spiritual life; serenity and joy,¹²⁴ with the necessary areas and times for recreation.

4. Develop in the pupil and sustain interest and participation, creativity and a spirit of initiative in the **correct use of free time**.

5. Constant encouragement and motivation **towards virtue, perfection and moral greatness**; respect for and appreciation of the cross, of the noblest ideals and of love of God, their neighbour, their homeland and the Church.

6. Initiation in prayer and the liturgical life; participation in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession; **solid piety**, born of deep faithfulness to God and virtue, of consistency of life and of Christian practice.¹²⁵

7. Fidelity to the **values of the people**, to its traditions and cultural expressions, as long as they are not contrary to Christian morals; promotion of these values insofar as they are vehicles of evangelical values.¹²⁶

¹¹⁴ Cf Lett. I. 360 - 361

¹¹⁵ Lett. I. 362

¹¹⁶ Lett. I. 358 - 359

¹¹⁷ Cf Lett. I. 360 - 363

¹¹⁸ Cf Lett. I. 338: “Build Christ in the lives of the young people.”

¹¹⁹ Cf Lett. I. 363

¹²⁰ Cf Lett. I. 355

¹²¹ Cf Lett. I. 375

¹²² Cf Lett. I. 251, 389 ff

¹²³ Cf Lett. I. 366

¹²⁴ Cf Lett. I. 389

¹²⁵ Cf Lett. I. 385 – 387

8. Unbiased conduct, **goodness, understanding and resoluteness**. Along with these, respect for the personalities of the pupils; behaviour that will instil in them attitudes of confidence, appreciation and respect for authority and the educators.

9. **Efficient teaching methods** that facilitate and accompany the studies and research of the pupils.¹²⁷

10. **Discipline** as a factor that will contribute to keeping up the quality of the educational atmosphere and which will permit the normal running of activities. Such a climate of order is more conducive to developing the capabilities of the pupils and to a better deployment of the educators, making best use of their potentialities.¹²⁸

11. **Observation, study and constant accompaniment** of the pupils so as to discover and develop qualities and right dispositions, as well as to correct faults.¹²⁹

12. **Reduction of punishments to the minimum** necessary. Always maintain an attitude of kindness and understanding,¹³⁰ and use persuasive arguments based on reason and religion.

13. Offer concrete opportunities to those pupils who do not adapt to the established norms of conduct, and **use all means** that may favour a change in behaviour. If this does not happen, the necessary information and help for placement in a more suitable environment must be made available.¹³¹

14. **Prayer for the pupils** and God's blessing on our humble work implored daily, as well as a sublime educational apostolate.¹³²

V. Role of kind-heartedness

93. Don Orione attached great importance to the role of kind-heartedness in the complete formation of a person. According to him "it is the heart, not the intelligence, that governs life. The Latins used to say of this: *'A little bit of heart makes the man;'* a little bit

¹²⁶ Don Orione took to heart the words that Rosmini addressed to his religious whom he had sent to England, asking them to become "*perfect Englishmen, for the love of Jesus Christ*". Lett. I. 246

¹²⁷ Cf Lett. I. 370: "You will obtain this, my dear people, by making your lessons stimulating – and your school will become attractive, relaxed, interesting – by maintaining order in your lessons, punctuality in the timetable, if you present yourselves well supplied with learning, science and all the knowledge necessary to satisfy and truly instruct, if you study, not what you like the most, but if you prepare the subjects seriously, studying that which will help you to teach well and profitably, and studying what will help the others better to profit from it. And let us then remember that the best teacher is not always the one who knows the most, *but who best know how to pass it on*. Make easy and popular what could be difficult and laborious to retain. Keep the minds of the schoolboys alive and attentive to your explanations."

¹²⁸ Cf Lett. I. 355 - 368

¹²⁹ Cf Lett. I. 369: "Study your boys: *observe them, reflect on them!* Do you want to instruct and educate and do you wish your teaching to be a sublime ministry? Observe, reflect, take notes and encourage any good result, and have a true and brotherly zeal for good results, and make each one see that you are interested in him with concern, with loving kindness as in a brother."

¹³⁰ Cf Lett. I. 378: "In a word: do not inflict punishments, unless you are truly forced to, and may strictness be tempered with loving-kindness; make yourselves loved rather than feared; make yourselves loved in Jesus Christ and 'obtain everything by love and nothing by force', as St. Francis de Sales said."

¹³¹ Cf Lett. I. 373: "When strictness has to be used, let it be always with wisdom, moderation and, particularly, let the families be told; and if then it still does not work, and we cannot avoid it, it would be better to suspend them from lessons, first for a few days, then for some more, and then, in the gravest of cases, it would be better to expel them either from the School or from the House. I am talking here about those who come just to the School as well as those who live with us. 'But they must be removed *with some consolation,*' says St. Ignatius: they must never leave with their minds full of poison, never!

¹³² Cf Lett. I. 357, 382

of heart, *it is the heart that makes the man.*¹³³ **The heart is the door through which all values enter.** Once these have come almost imperceptibly into the heart and are consolidated with strong convictions of reason and faith, they will form the strong kind of personalities that are required these days by the world and the Church. Existential truth, the type which counts for men and women, is an experience of good, even coming before intellectual knowledge.¹³⁴

94. The educator must lead the pupils through the door of kind-heartedness and personal example to **assimilation of the true values of culture and faith**, sociability and a sense of belonging to the Church. These will induce readiness and commitment with the community and with the Church so that, at times of conflict between legitimate interests, the demands of his vocation and his conscience will generously prevail over those of his profession.¹³⁵

¹³³ Cf Lett. I. 359

¹³⁴ Cf Lett. I. 359 - 363

¹³⁵ Cf Lett. I. 366

Chapter 6: EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE EDUCATING COMMUNITY

I. Educational environment

95. According to Don Orione, as we have already noted, “the school must be a family, a moral, **well-disciplined family, guided with much affection in the Lord and with great care.**”¹³⁶ These words refer particularly **to the type and quality** of the relationships that form among all the people who work within the bounds of the school, including those with different responsibilities and roles. Everything, in fact, has an influence on the educational environment, whether it be structures, organisation or teaching.¹³⁷

“In pedagogical circles today great stress is put on the climate of a school: the sum total of the different components at work in the school which interact with one another in such a way as to create favourable conditions for a formation process. Education always takes place within certain specific conditions of space and time, through the activities of a group of individuals who are active and also interactive among themselves. They follow a programme of studies which is logically ordered and freely accepted. Therefore, the elements to be considered in developing an organic vision of a school climate are: persons, space, time, relationships, teaching, study, and various other activities.”¹³⁸

96. A **climate of fellowship and participation** must be created, so that from the very first day the pupils will feel that they are in an environment that is sustained by the faith, and where the living **presence of Jesus, the “Master,”** is evident. Pupils should think of the school as an extension of their own homes, with some of the amenities which can create a pleasant and happy atmosphere.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Lett. I. 355

¹³⁷ Dim. Rel. Nos. 98 and 99 make an extensive description of the educational process. After illustrating the double dimension of a complete human education and education in the faith, it adds: “We need to think of Christian education as a movement or a growth process, directed toward an ideal goal which goes beyond the limitations of anything human. At the same time the process must be harmonious, so that Christian formation takes place within and in the course of human formation. The two are not separate and parallel paths; they are complementary forms of education which become one in the goals of the teacher and the willing reception of the students. The Gospel notes this harmonious growth in the child Jesus.” (No. 98).

¹³⁸ Cf Dim. Rel. 24

¹³⁹ Cf Dim. Rel. 25 – 27; Lett. I. 242

“**The physical proximity of the school to a church** can contribute a great deal toward achieving the educational aims. A church should not be seen as something extraneous, but as a familiar and intimate place where those young people who are believers can find the presence of the Lord: ‘Behold, I am with you all days,’ (Mt 28: 20). Liturgy planning should be especially careful to bring the school community and the local Church together.”¹⁴⁰

97. A family atmosphere must especially be created **by the educators**, with a climate of harmony among them, a careful discharge of their own work, **habitual serenity and joy, a welcoming presence, friendly availability, witness** to the faith and **active involvement**.

Some of the conditions for creating a positive and supportive climate are the following: a **cheerful agreement** on the educational goals, upholding of **interpersonal relationships based on love and Christian freedom, the willing cooperation of everyone** and a shared determination to reach “the highest levels in every aspect, both human and Christian, of the educational process.”¹⁴¹

“Through this daily witness, the students will come to appreciate the uniqueness of the environment to which their youth has been entrusted. If it is not present, then there is little left which can make the school Catholic.”¹⁴²

II. The educating community

98. The educating community, already described by Don Orione as a family, shares the same teaching directives and norms. Mutual relationships in the different schools must therefore be governed by **charity, solidarity** and a sense of **responsible freedom**. Such qualities are capable of guiding every member and every sector towards the best discharge of their respective duties, in the interests of themselves and of others. Respect for each other’s expertise and the principle of **subsidiarity**, as well as eliminating needless overlapping and intrusiveness which could lead to conflict, help towards integrating the different functions in a hierarchical scale.¹⁴³

99. In the face of a school situation which accentuates the institutional aspect and which is organised mainly for the purposes of study or work qualifications, often disregarding the personal situation of its members, the Catholic school must, due to its educational and exemplary function, stress the **personal and community dimension**.¹⁴⁴

100. “The educating community, formed of all those who participate in some way in the life of the Catholic school, is the **driving force and centre of responsibility** for the whole educational and cultural experience, in an open and continuous dialogue with the ecclesial community of which it is and must feel a vital part. (...)”

¹⁴⁰ Cf Dim. Rel 30; Lett. I. 386

¹⁴¹ Cf Dim. Rel. 103ff

¹⁴² Dim. Rel. 26

¹⁴³ Cf Lett. I. 353: “I am sending you (this letter) for a greater consensus of minds and ideas, as well as for giving the House a uniformity of direction and spirit.” In another letter, cf Lett. I. 238 – 239, Don Orione writes: “Our growing Congregation (...) needs clear, prompt and general rules in order to have uniformity of direction, spirit, discipline (...). Uniformity and unity that will edify with their splendour in the holy love of Jesus Christ, that will weld us evermore into one body.”

¹⁴⁴ Cf Dim. Rel. 31: “The declaration *Gravissimum educationis* notes an important advance in the way a Catholic school is thought of: the transition from the school as an institution to the school as a community.”

The gifts are varied, as are the duties and expertise required by the planning and the management of the life of the school, but every gift and every job is to be respected and directed harmoniously towards the service of education."¹⁴⁵

101. Within this community:

* **Religious** offer a service that is impartial – the richness of the **charism** and **educational tradition** of the Congregation, the witness of the consecrated and community life made up of prayer and work, careful professional training and continuous spiritual youthfulness.¹⁴⁶

* “At the side of the priests and Religious, **lay teachers** contribute their competence and their faith witness to the Catholic school.”¹⁴⁷

102. Within the school **channels of communication** should be open in every direction to make it possible for all concerned – parents, students and teachers - to have the opportunity and willingness to participate.¹⁴⁸

103. In such an environment cultural, religious, social, artistic and sporting undertakings can find their rightful place, whether they are occasional or permanent, or connected with the school or the district and parish. Such activities are of considerable help in developing the pupils’ capabilities for human, social and ecclesial commitment, while at the same time they offer them **suitable opportunities for education to responsible freedom and sensitivity to the needs of others.**

104. A community that is not closed in on itself **facilitates the participation of families** not solely in academic matters but also in the functioning of the educational programme. They must therefore be **made aware of and involved in** questions that depend on their own responsibility, particularly “issues such as religious, moral, or sexual education, orientation toward a profession, or a choice of one's vocation in life.”¹⁴⁹

105. The educating community, moreover, sees to the integration of young people into society, fosters respect to the state and its representatives, the observance of just laws and the **pursuit of the common good.**¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Sc. Catt. Italia. 34

¹⁴⁶ Cf Dim. Rel. 35 - 36

¹⁴⁷ Dim. Rel. 37. Concerning the role of the laity in Catholic schools we would like to add in three more significant passages of the Church’s Magisterium: “While the present analysis of the lay Catholic as an educator will concentrate on the role of the teacher, the analysis is applicable to all of the other roles, each according to their own proper activity. The material can be a basis for deep personal reflection.” (Il Laico, 15). “One specific characteristic of the educational profession assumes its most profound significance in the Catholic educator: the communication of truth. For the Catholic educator, whatever is true is a participation in Him who is the Truth; the communication of truth, therefore, as a professional activity, is thus fundamentally transformed into a unique participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, carried on through one's teaching.” (Il Laico, 16) “Here too, in the communication of culture, lay educators have a special role to play. They are the authors of, and the sharers in, the more lay aspects of culture; their mission, then, is to help the students come to understand, from a lay point of view, the global character that is proper to culture, the synthesis which will join together the lay and the religious aspects of culture, and the personal contribution which those in the lay state can be expected to make to culture.” (Il Laico, 20)

¹⁴⁸ Cf Dim. Rel. 39

¹⁴⁹ Cf Dim. Rel. 42ff

¹⁵⁰ Cf Dim. Rel. 45 - 46

106. Recalling that the specific scenario in which the Catholic school exists and operates is primordialily that of the **local and universal Church**, the educating community remains faithful to the authority and teaching of the Pope and the Bishop, maintains contact with the diocese, the parish and those associations and movements that are useful for the promotion of the youth apostolate. Thus situated it contributes towards consolidating the Christian vision among the pupils, facilitates a grounding in virtue and encourages consequent involvement and commitment in the community.¹⁵¹

107. The organisation of the scholastic community must follow the general principles of **joint responsibility for education, complementarity, devolution, harmony, functionality and coordination.**

III. Roles of the different members of the scholastic community

1. *The pupils*

108. “It is not machines I am commending to you,” wrote Don Orione in his letter on education in his schools; “I am commending *the souls of the young*, their **moral, Catholic and intellectual formation**. *Take care of their spirit, cultivate their minds, educate their hearts!*”¹⁵²

The pupils are the school’s reason for existence and “**active agents in their own formation process.**”¹⁵³ Accordingly, the work of cultural, human and Christian formation must take into account their age and development, as well as their intellectual, moral, religious, family, social and ecclesial situations. They themselves also participate in developing and carrying out the educational process “in ways that become progressively possible as they grow in maturity.”¹⁵⁴

109. Each individual educational action must therefore be seen by both teacher and pupil in a framework of *growth*. The pupils, insofar as they are “active agents,”¹⁵⁵ become active subjects by accepting and **taking on board the Christian vision** of life that is put forward by the Orionine school. They do this by their conscious, personal and free acceptance of it.

110. *They therefore make the following commitments:*

1. to cooperate in the **achievement and validation** of the educational goals;
2. to give increasingly serious thought to **the motivations** for their choice of an Orionine school;
3. to adopt the **values put forward** and to enrich the school community with their own sensitivity and creativity;
4. to grow in their ability to be open towards others, placing their intelligence and

¹⁵¹ Cf Dim. Rel. 44. Here it states, among other things: “Concretely, the educational goals of the school include a concern for the life and the problems of the Church, both local and universal. These goals are attentive to the Magisterium, and include cooperation with Church authorities. Catholic students are helped to become active members of the parish and diocesan communities. They have opportunities to join Church associations and Church youth groups, and they are taught to collaborate in local Church projects.

¹⁵² Lett. I. 367

¹⁵³ Cf Dim. Rel. 105

¹⁵⁴ Cf Sc. Catt. Italia. 48

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 48

energies at the service of the community.

2. *The parents*

111. “These are the **first and principal educators of their children.**”¹⁵⁶ Consequently they must play a full part in the educating community and make it complete by facilitating the human, social and Christian growth of their children and actively cooperating in the achievement of the educational plan.

112. *It is their particular responsibility to:*

1. provide their children, for the whole of the time they are in education, with **support, dialogue and encouragement** in harmony with the other members of the teaching community;
2. guide their children towards a **progressive and responsible personal independence**, until they have achieved true freedom;
3. discuss with the teachers **adoption of training methods** that are increasingly more suitable for the age, condition and development of their children, by means of a relationship of sincere cooperation;
4. **accompany their children in their journey of faith** through a Christian witness of their life and by sharing the teaching goals of the school;
5. **offer their own professional experience and competence** for a greater quality of the service that the school is called to provide;
6. be committed on the social and political level and promote and support the approval of **laws that allow for everyone to have the opportunity to choose the school that they want**, in accordance with their own educational beliefs. Don Orione, writing to the parents of his pupils, stated: “The faith is the greatest legacy that you can leave them; a faith that is firmly fixed in the hearts of your children is the surest guarantee that they will not one day become the sorrow of your old age, the disgrace of your name and the ruin of your families.”¹⁵⁷

3. *The teachers*

113. Don Orione wrote: “Who is it that makes, that creates, the school? *It is the Master!* What turns them into scholars? *The example of the Master!* What do the results of the school depend on? *Largely on the Master!* Young people watch their teacher; they live more from *his example* than from his words: ‘*words move but examples lead.*’”¹⁵⁸ Just a little before, in the same letter, he indicated the goal that the teacher should strive for: “*We will, however, never accomplish anything, until we have Christianised the youth, in its soul of faith and in its life, both private and public.*”¹⁵⁹

114. **Teachers, whether they are lay or religious, are the cornerstone** of the entire educational plan, insofar as they spend the greater part of the time in direct contact with the students. Don Orione urged them: “If you want to be supremely effective in the art of educating and instructing, **take Jesus Christ as your model**, the Master of Masters. Remember that the Gospels are the **most sublime educational and teaching treatise** that

¹⁵⁶ GE 3; Fam. Cons. 36; Sc. Catt. Italia. 48

¹⁵⁷ Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. II. 14

¹⁵⁸ Lett. I. 362

¹⁵⁹ Lett. I. 359

exists.”¹⁶⁰

Even though nowadays they perhaps do not enjoy the same esteem and appreciation everywhere, their work is **essential** for society and is **looked upon by the Church as a “true ministry”**: “The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, 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, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community.”¹⁶¹

115. As educators of men and women and of Christians, playing a full part in their respective families and communities, they must not, in the performance of their mission, overlook the complex reality of today’s world where, despite the great achievements of science and technology, there exist at the same time great social tragedies such as hunger, illiteracy, exploitation, aggressiveness and violence, disregard for the person, the widespread availability of drugs, the legalisation of abortion, spiritual confusion and many other moral disorders. By teaching, healthy criteria and personal commitment they must encourage attitudes in their students that can one day turn them into adults who are involved in the process of transformation of society in a way that is consonant with the evangelical principles.¹⁶²

4. The religious community

116. The driving force of the educating community is in **the religious community**, whose members live out their consecration to God, bearing witness to it by their complete dedication to the evangelising mission of the Church according to the charism of the Founder and consistent with the demands of the world in which they live.¹⁶³

117. Religious who work in the school as **educators to the faith** are, together with the teaching staff, the first players in the combination of faith and culture, and faith and life. In this task they will involve parents and the pupils themselves. In our schools, moreover, they **represent the father who welcomes**, smiles and puts right situations of discomfort and tension by kindness. The presence of the **spiritual counsellor** among the young people is considered necessary for looking after the spiritual and apostolic dimension of the pupils.

118. The entire religious community, and especially the religious in charge of the school, in conformance with the directives laid down by the Constitutions of the Congregation, is **responsible** for the running, managing and enlivenment of the school. It will be accountable for this to the Congregation, the local Church and the outside community.

¹⁶⁰ Lett. I. 371

¹⁶¹ Cf II Laico. 24

¹⁶² Cf II Laico. 19

¹⁶³ “The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity toward the poor, the weak and those who suffer. The complete generosity underlying this attitude and these actions stands in marked contrast to human selfishness. It raises precise questions which lead to God and to the Gospel. A commitment to peace, justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel when it is a sign of concern for persons and is directed toward integral human development.” RM. 42

5. *The managerial staff*

119. The managerial staff, according to each person's responsibility within the school structure, will work together with the religious, particularly the Superior or the Person in charge of the School, for the coordination, operation and supervision of the school organisation, in order that this latter is truly operating for the benefit and right aspirations of the students and their families. They will carry out the directives of the Congregation's Superiors and the civil authorities, encourage the best possible standard of teaching and discipline, anticipate needs, see that problems are dealt with and collaborate with the religious in the creation of an environment of study, order, and responsibility in carrying out obligations as well as trust, enthusiasm and a good spirit which is necessary for achieving the aims of the school.

IV. Unity

120. Every member of the educating community must keep Don Orione's words in mind: *"In the house there must be harmony of minds and desires, unity of hearts and of work in Christ. Think of the responsibility that you have before God, before the Congregation, before society."*¹⁶⁴

Chapter 7: FORMATIONAL ITINERARIES

I. Reflections of an educational character

121. Among the many aspects of Don Orione's personality the one that is still highlighted today is that of a man of charity, a **"father of the poor and the abandoned,"** according to Pius XII's well-known definition. There is a good reason for this, as Luigi Orione, from his childhood and through his adolescence **came into contact with the poor and lived a series of experiences that were to kindle the fire of charity within him:**

* His mother went without the necessities of life in order to help the poor and sent little Luigi, who was still very young, to offer their humble contribution to whoever knocked at their door.¹⁶⁵

* There were often long lines of handicapped in front of the "Little House" of the Cottolengo. He would be full of emotion as he saw them moving forward, supporting one another, while he was doing his junior high school studies in Don Bosco's school at Valdocco.¹⁶⁶

* His participation in the youth association of the Vincentians frequently made it possible for him to meet the humblest of the people of the Tortona area, in order to bring them whatever the association had managed to collect on their behalf.¹⁶⁷

* In the Tortona seminary he had the opportunity to come to know and take on board the turning point in social doctrine that Leo XIII impressed upon the Church with the doctrine

¹⁶⁴ Lett. I. 367

¹⁶⁵ Cf Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. I. 79

¹⁶⁶ Cf Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. I. 346 - 349

¹⁶⁷ Cf Don Orione e la P.O.D.P. I. 615 - 616

of “Rerum Novarum.”¹⁶⁸ Such providential episodes and experiences left an indelible mark on him and developed in his heart an exceptional sensitivity for the poor and the suffering. This was a passion that typified his person and his work in a saintly manner.

122. So now, in order to respond to the challenges of today’s world and to attain the specific objectives of Catholic and Orionine education in line with the maturing of young people, by forming them with that human and Christian mettle which Don Orione wanted, we are putting forward some “**itineraries,**”¹⁶⁹ or a **set of linked experiences** in areas of acquaintances, perceptions, contacts, evaluations and critical judgements that are suitable for consolidating the Christian vision of reality, vocation and the gift of self in the students. This would include life attitudes and behaviour indicating a person capable of fitting into his/her own environment with a living experience of the Gospel.

II. General objectives

123. Some general objectives regulate the work of education and set out different areas in the constitution regarding the choice of methods, the formulation of stages and the definition of goals to be achieved.

124. According to Don Orione our education must work towards forming **citizens and Christians** who will be a credit to themselves, their families, their towns and their Homeland: young people who are educated, honest, industrious and fully able one day to be accomplished workers or professionals, capable of earning an honest living and thus able to support their families. They will be heralds of the faith, of goodness, of moral and civil progress, exemplary Catholics and firm Christians, formed by the Gospels and the teaching of the Church.¹⁷⁰

To achieve all this students must, by means of established **itineraries of assimilation of values, and with concrete experiences:**

1. proceed towards the **complete development of their personality** until they reach human and Christian maturity;
2. **assimilate culture in a systematic and careful manner** by means of a real and vital discovery of its different aspects;
3. receive, in a manner that is consonant with their age and development, a **sensible and positive sexual education;**
4. be placed in a situation where they may discover their **vocation** and take up their

¹⁶⁸ Cf PAPASOGLI, *Vita di don Orione*, pp. 64 - 65

¹⁶⁹ According to Riccardo Tonelli the use of the expression “itinerary” in teaching has come about from treatises on the spiritual life. It appears also in some of the documents of the Church. In “The religious dimension of education in a Catholic school” it is used from No. 78 onwards when dealing with the sacraments. In No. 79 it states: “An understanding of the sacramental journey has profound educational implications. Students become aware that being a member of the Church is something dynamic, responding to every person’s need to continue growing all through life. When we meet the Lord in the Sacraments, we are never left unchanged. Through the Spirit, he causes us to grow in the Church, offering us ‘grace upon grace’; the only thing he asks is our cooperation. The educational consequences of this touch on our relationship with God, our witness as a Christian, and our choice of a personal vocation.” From the time of the 2nd National Catechistic Congress in 1987 people in Argentina began to speak of a permanent catechistic itinerary, seen as a teaching for every stage of a person’s life. This would ensure that the revelation of Jesus Christ – as Catechesi Tradendae states – would not be limited to the fascination of a first fleeting encounter, but would become an acquaintance, growing deeper and more permanent every day. Cf C.T. 35ff

¹⁷⁰ Cf Lett. I. 241ff, 356, 359, 383

rightful place in society and the world of work;

5. become **new persons in justice and holiness**, developing in themselves a firmly rooted sense of belonging to the Church and of fidelity to her Magisterium;

6. develop attitudes that will ensure their commitment to **upholding justice and peace, seeking the common good and fostering democratic coexistence** thus permitting them to contribute to the human, Christian and cultural development of society.

III. Criteria

125. Every itinerary assumes that the **person to be educated is able to see to his own development**; he must therefore be offered the requisites for helping him to be aware of his own dignity and of the part that he must play in the history of his country and the world. He must be trained to make to free and personal judgements of conscience and self-determination as a person and a member of the community.

126. The itinerary requires acceptance **of the circumstances of the pupil**, with no prejudices, while accepting his personality, culture and history. He must be accompanied in the acquisition of an interpretative view of the world and its more pressing human problems.

127. The young person must also be helped to develop attitudes that will not only lead him to analyse, judge and even challenge, but also to **transform his own life and his surroundings**. This will be done through a faithful following of models of human and Christian behaviour that will lead him to the formulation of a life project to allow him to make his own responsible contribution to society and the Church.

128. The teaching will aim at fostering the maturity of the pupil. It must **take precedence and be continuous** and must not therefore be limited to occasional or emergency situations.

IV. Spheres

129. For each of the spheres, objectives, means and methods must be put forward which will help to complete the corresponding itineraries.

130. *Cultural sphere*

Contact with the different disciplines involves **an authentic teaching and cultural assimilation**, in such a way that culture is not reduced to a mere placing of different kinds of knowledge side by side. The objectives must therefore be order, intellectual precision, the ability to summarise **and the assimilation of culture as an organic totality for life**.

131. *Occupational and professional sphere*

Classical, scientific and technical subjects must lead to precision and to knowledge of the laws appertaining to the different disciplines and professions, while they are all subject to an ethical and moral viewpoint. Care must be taken that the school curriculum maintains a connection with the requirements of the world of work.

132. *Sphere of association and affections*

The great need felt by young people for associating, getting to know each other, for loving and for feeling accepted is a crucial one for their formation. The pupil, therefore, must find the elements in the school organisation which will lead him to become aware of the working of his affections and those of others and **to assume attitudes and behaviour that are compatible with the Christian concept of love.** These will help him to start a family or to move towards the gift of himself in the consecrated life.

133. *Sphere of education to sociability*

In all the school activities (sporting, recreational, artistic, cultural, etc.) the pupil must find a path for formation to sociability and development of his own availability in regard to others.

134. *Socio-political sphere*

Education to solidarity will include precise and existentially valid programmes for initiating young people to forms of social and political commitment. These programmes must be based on the social doctrine of the Church, who has no other objective than the establishment of the culture of love. With this in mind, gradual experiences of volunteer work and participation and involvement in social structures must be encouraged.

135. *Vocational and professional sphere*

Acquaintances, experiences of participation, spiritual life and contact with the different institutions and professions must form part of a programme for helping the young person in the **discovery and fulfilment of his vocation**, whether lay or consecrated, and in the **choice of a career.** At the time when his own **life project** has become defined and confirmed he must find in the school enlightenment for his doubts and courage for reaching goals which are more lofty and generous.

136. *Sphere of religion and apostolate*

Occasions of **prayer and religious formation**, together with the sacramental life, must contribute to the development of the natural religious sense of the pupil, while enabling his moral conscience to mature and forming him to virtue.¹⁷¹ **Participation in pastoral groups and activities** will offer him a way to become an active member of the ecclesial, parochial and diocesan community, in the service of evangelisation.

137. *Orionine sphere*

The characteristic expressions of Orionine spirituality will mark out the pupil's entire formative journey (social dimension, Christian and Catholic formation, acquisition of a sound personality). Accordingly, the Pope's feast day, devotion to Mary, charitable service, volunteer work, participation in missionary groups etc., will assume great importance both for the **assimilation of the Founder's charism and for participation in the Congregations own**

¹⁷¹ Cf Lett. I. 388 - 389

actions.

V. Goals, attitudes and values

138. *Development of the conscience and sense of responsibility*

In line with its educational and pastoral aims, the work of teaching is directed towards assimilation of culture and the complete formation of the person, in the light of the Christian view of life, where it sees the heart of the world in Christ, the new people of God in the Church and the universal spiritual guide in the Pope. The itineraries described, therefore, have as their aim the taking on and assimilation of the following human and Christian values:

1. **Religion**, shown as
 - faith in God the Father, the author of life and nature; the ultimate foundation for all things. Trust in his Providence;
 - faith in Christ our Saviour, the supreme model for mankind;
 - faith in the Holy Spirit, from whom every inspiration for good and virtue comes;
 - veneration for the Word of God;
 - devotion to Mary, the Mother of God and our Mother, and to the Saints;
 - fidelity to the Pope and the Church;
 - regard for popular religious expressions that are compatible with the Catholic faith.

2. **The fundamental dignity of the human person**, that determines the absolute right to life from conception, underpins all other rights and is the basis of the inalienable responsibilities and personal decisions in the context of society.

3. Respect for **creation, as the work of God**, which gives rise to a sense of responsibility towards the environment and towards future generations.

4. **The Christian family**, as a prototype for human relations and the starting point for the transmission of the faith.

5. **The essential dignity of men and women**, the source of mutual respect and the foundation of their association and shared responsibility in the building up of mankind, of culture and of the community.

6. **Fellowship**, which educates to recognising in every person one's brother or sister who is equal in duties and rights of participation in the sharing of spiritual, cultural and material goods, insofar as they are gifts from God for the whole of humanity.

7. **Solidarity** in defence of common rights and as a duty for protecting the weak and the poor.

8. **Freedom as a duty**: freedom from conditioning; as **self-determination**: making oneself capable of choosing and acting; and as the pinnacle of **maturity**: being for and with others.

9. **Justice, impartiality and love**, as standards for participating in the life and the goods of the community.

10. **Peace**, as the atmosphere of coexistence.

11. **Honesty and honour**, as respect for moral standards and the value of keeping one's word.

12. An attitude of giving freely, impartiality, **generosity and willingness**, as expressions of one's own spirituality.

13. **Sacrifice and the cross**, self-discipline and spiritual detachment as values necessary for spiritual advancement and personality formation.

14. An attitude of **humility**, generating a realistic vision of oneself and making reconciliation possible.

15. **Dialogue**, as an instrument of communication and understanding among persons and groups.

16. **The force of law**, as a principle of stability and security, an instrument of social order and a criterion for resolving conflicts of interest and for effectuating social changes.

17. **Work**, as a normal instrument for obtaining what is necessary for living, a means for human progress, a medium of creativity and an occasion of fellowship.

18. **Economy**, as a value in the service of mankind.

19. **Progress, science, technology and possessions**, as instruments and opportunities in the service of the growth of persons and communities.

139. The educational itineraries, whose goals and methods have been briefly indicated, must contribute towards realising the urgent exhortations of Don Orione on the formation of the character and on education to virtue: "Seek every opportunity so that teaching may serve education and moral perfection and that the youth may be formed to have a sound Catholic conscience. They must be educated and strengthened in the best part of the person, *the will*, the seat of virtue. (...) Our young people must not just be brought to goodness and formation, but to *perfection and moral greatness*, which is above all in the *will and the heart*."¹⁷²

Chapter 8: PROFILE OF THE PERSON TO BE FORMED

¹⁷² Lett. I. 363

I. Renewal of mankind and society in Christ

140. Don Orione's commitment in the field of formation is **for service to the humble and the ordinary people** with the objective of rebuilding and reaffirming fidelity to the Church, as the people of God, and to the Pope, as the universal spiritual guide.¹⁷³

141. In the complex situation of today's world the formation of Christians must be reinforced so that – without affectation, aggressiveness or fuss, but rather with a calm and deep conviction – they will remain faithful to the universal Magisterium of the Pope and the Church¹⁷⁴ in order for us to build together Christ's kingdom of charity, or, according to Paul VI's words, **"the civilisation of love;"** Christians¹⁷⁵ of a strong personality,¹⁷⁶ strongly rooted in the faith, formed on the Gospels and the doctrine of the Magisterium; men who, by their human formation, professional skills and readiness to be of service, will be true upholders of civil and Christian progress.¹⁷⁷

II. Profile of the Orionine pupil

142. Four basic features are worthy of emphasis. A pupil of Don Orione's is a **man who is aware, complete and creative, and who chooses Jesus Christ.**

1. A man who is aware

143. To be aware implies **having knowledge of self, of others and of reality**, as worlds that we can never finish discovering. The initial form of approach to life is amazement; every healthy form of education must make sure to feed this, in order to avoid being overcome by habit or presumption. In this regard the Orionine school must assist the pupil to become aware of himself by developing the simple **primary aspirations that are present deep in his heart: beauty, goodness, justice and friendship.** To develop these aspirations means to cause their universality and consistency to be discovered. These ideals, in fact, are not unreachable utopian desires, but **absolutely necessary pointers and indications for the building of a person's own life and for the future of mankind.**

¹⁷³ Formation of the will and the heart "must serve as a ladder for climbing higher, so as to ascend to God and to love of the holy Church of God. This is our great and sacred love." Lett. I. 363

¹⁷⁴ If the young people respect and love us, "we will lead them to God and the Church." Lett. I. 242ff
"Let us form a league of fidelity which will accept and defend, not only the deposit of faith in its entirety, but also the actions and directives of the Holy See without reticence or whimpering. (...) Catholics must have a complete attachment and love for the true Christian life and for everything that the Holy See demands and desires." Messaggi I. 10. 12

¹⁷⁵ "Young people will be *educated*, but we must always bear in mind that they are *rational* beings and that they are *Catholics*: two means should therefore be used: *reason* and the *Catholic faith*, i.e. the *universal* and *complete* faith.

¹⁷⁶ "Let us promote in the young people a sincerely practised Catholic life (...) and a great love for God, by creating or forming in them a Catholic Christian conscience and character, one that is **upright and as firm as granite.**" Lett. I. 389

¹⁷⁷ "Turn our young people into heralds of the faith, of goodness and of moral and civil progress for society." Lett. I. 356

"There are ex-pupils of ours who are model judges, magistrates, engineers, priests, doctors, barristers, solicitors, chemists, merchants, teachers, landlords, all of whom are honest, hard-working and Christian, who are good fathers, even councillors and mayors. (...) We have given many priests to the Church, devoted sons of the Church and sentinels and heralds of the faith; we have given many good elements to society, to enable it to be renewed in a Christian and Catholic manner." Lett. I. 383ff

144. It also entails guiding the pupil **towards the decisive choices in life according to a hierarchy of values that are gradually assimilated**, encountered and admired in those who form the teaching community. An unavoidable condition will be to educate to work and acceptance of sacrifice if we want life to become “the realisation of the dreams of youth.”¹⁷⁸ The human condition, in fact, is entirely marked by limitations and by sin. These lead daily to the experience of pain and sacrifice. Continued vigilance, a spirit of conversion and the service of brotherly correction are therefore required, in order to avoid what St. Augustine feared, i.e. that people easily believe what they want to be true.

2. *The complete person*

145. The education that we impart **is aimed at achieving a harmonious development of the person so that the disintegrating tendencies present in human nature and in the current mentality do not have the upper hand.** We find this concern also in the new Code of Canon Law which, in regard to Catholic education, expresses it in this way: “Since true education must strive for the complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of society, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life.”¹⁷⁹

146. With the unselfish dedication and loving guidance experienced in the educators, the process of complete formation will ensure that the pupil learns how to come to know himself, listen to himself, respect himself and, conscious of his own abilities, resources and limits, learn **to live his life with a sense of responsibility.** Only with such an openness of mind and heart will he know in the future **how to go beyond simple personal, family or professional interests and be capable of making his own impartial contribution when circumstances warrant it.** Readiness and the free gift of self are two of the most typical marks of the complete person, a person who does not allow himself to be closed in on one course of action, but lets himself be drawn out every day by reality and by the Lord’s new commandment: “Love one another, as I have loved you.”¹⁸⁰

147. The complete person is not one who just carries out his duties and rests satisfied when he has performed them, because **his duties are life itself**, whether in great actions or in mundane ones. We find the model of a complete person in the Gospel figure of the Samaritan: he does not act like a social worker or a volunteer, he does not just *do something*; he is, above all and first of all *somebody*.

3. *A creative person*

148. “*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.*”¹⁸¹

Work is one of the fundamental callings of mankind. **The world was intentionally given to us incomplete, so that we could participate in the creative actions of the Father, continuing the work of creation that He began.**¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ John XXIII

¹⁷⁹ Code of Canon Law, Canon 795

¹⁸⁰ Jn. 15:12

¹⁸¹ Gen 2:15

In view of these considerations we may say that work is also the expression of our being. It was not simply commanded, therefore, in order to *possess*, or to count for something more, but to *be*. Accordingly, we cannot imagine that such a qualifying aspect of life should be divorced from the values and innermost hopes of mankind: truth, solidarity and happiness. In this sense the *Laborem Exercens* affirms that the purpose of work is not work itself, but the person.¹⁸³

4. *Choosing Jesus Christ*

149. “Your Faith is not enough for God. He needs to see and note your works.” These are Don Orione’s words.¹⁸⁴

There is no doubt that we have come to the point that Don Orione greatly desired, an essential point that must not be betrayed. We must not fail to live up to the reason for which we open and maintain schools: “My dear people, **we will however never accomplish anything until we have Christianised the youth, in its soul of faith and in its life, both private and public; until we have once more made the consciences and characters of our pupils Christian.**”¹⁸⁵ It is as if to say: leading the pupils to be men and women who are aware, complete and creative... is not enough. Our mission is fulfilled when we have led them to Christ. If they are true Christians they will surely be true persons. This is the heart of Don Orione’s apostolic action; this is the heart of a Catholic school: to contribute to the remaking of mankind according to the model of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the Way for whoever wants to be an authentic person.¹⁸⁶

150. A pupil of Don Orione is not ashamed of Jesus Christ. He is loyal to the Church; he loves the Pope, as that is the wish of Christ Himself as a bond of unity, and obeys him cheerfully. He also prays and works for the fulfilment of what Jesus asked the Father in prayer at the last supper, “*ut unum sint,*” (that they may all be one).¹⁸⁷

The precepts of the Church, therefore, will no longer be a collection of rules to be kept, but rather the **great pointers and points of reference that Tradition has marked out** and which allow us to make a personal and ecclesial journey of faith. With this in view the following practices make sense: regular attendance at Sunday Mass, reception of the sacraments, prayer, devotion to Our Lady,¹⁸⁸ attentiveness to the Magisterium and the devotional practices that are the heritage of our people.

151. Students who are formed in this way will, by the grace of God, be able to provide the Church and society with elements contributing – in obedience and fidelity to Don Orione’s charism – to the *renewal of all things in Christ*, in the sure knowledge that “the Catholic Faith and a sound Christian character, formed on the Gospels and the Church’s teaching, are the most powerful forces of the moral world.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² Cf *Laborem Exercens*, 25

¹⁸³ Cf *Laborem Exercens*, 9

¹⁸⁴ Lett. II. 55

¹⁸⁵ Lett. I. 359

¹⁸⁶ Constitutions of the Little Work of Divine Providence, Art. 5

¹⁸⁷ Jn 17: 21

¹⁸⁸ On devotion to Our Lady in particular, see Lett. I. 139: “And now another thing – and we must never forget this – there must be a most tender and filial **devotion to Our Most Blessed Lady.** (...) Oh! You will do so much good, my sons, if you stay close to the Celestial Virgin, our Mother and Foundress, as you make your journey! You will do so much good for the souls of the little ones if you light the lamp of love for our most blessed Mother in their hearts.”

¹⁸⁹ Lett. I. 359

III. Features of the former pupil

152. *Continuity of the Orionine educational plan during life*

It was not without good reason that Don Orione wanted to define his teaching method as *Paternal-Christian*. His idea of a school, in fact, was above all a family which, although growing in space and time, continues walking with every pupil, stimulating their permanent human and Christian perfection.

153. *Former pupils are our children*

“*Di’ un po’, Luis, quanti fio’ ghet giamò?*” (Tell me, Luigi, how many children have you now?)

“*Suma quasi trenta, ma po’ at vidaré.*” (There are about thirty of us, but you’ll see.)

Don Orione, at the end of the initial scholastic year in his first little school of San Bernardino in Tortona, had gained the confidence of his boys to such an extent that he was now considered by them all as their father. The friendship and mutual trust were so deep that his mother Carolina became involved too. She began to feel that she was surrounded by a host of grandchildren. A proof of how capable Don Orione was of loving his pupils, was how **he not only looked after their education, but also and above all their future as men and sons of God.**

154. *Don Orione’s heritage*

The directions, exhortations and expressions that Don Orione used in the letter he sent from Buenos Aires to his “Old Pupils” on 7 September 1935 still form today a true and appropriate spiritual heritage for us and for our pupils. Here, for instance:

1. *The awareness of belonging to a “body” of which we will always form part:*

“And I cannot tell you how much pleasure I felt on receiving the news that this year also you will be meeting again, and that new sections of your Association have been established.”¹⁹⁰

2. *Pride in nationality and in the Orionine connection:*

“From this far-off land I send the best wishes of great numbers of your old companions, ex-Pupils like yourselves, who, even in this hospitable Argentina, keep the name of Italy exalted and honoured, as they are proud of having been educated in our Institutions.”¹⁹¹

3. *Trust in the effectiveness of education:*

“I am ever more convinced that Jesus Christ is never sowed or ploughed in vain in the hearts of children and of young people. That even if, at a certain stage of life, the age at which

¹⁹⁰ Lett. II. 287

¹⁹¹ Lett. II. 288

man is most outspoken, it can sometimes seem that Christ is buried, He died in such a way that sooner or later He will always, always rise again.”¹⁹²

4. *The will to keep the flame of the faith and the Christian education we have received alive:*

“Some of these Pupils of ours, students of Santa Chiara and of the Tortona Boarding School, confessed to me that they had had to cross, not only seas but had received so many hard knocks and ups and downs, that they felt that they had lost their sense of direction, but that they had found it again through the faith. They found in that faith the greatest help and encouragement of their lives.”¹⁹³

5. *Moral strength:*

“I wanted nothing more than to know that they were always mindful, always grateful, and always in holy fear of God, living in the midst of this big world, where there is a bit of everything, living moral lives, fulfilling their duties, giving good example to their children.”¹⁹⁴

6. *The wish to go back to see Don Orione to relive a happy time together:*

“From time to time three or four of them happen to meet me here, as well as some from the first Sunday School, in the Bishop’s garden. They are now grown men and more than grey haired. They greet each other and come to look for me as if they were going home, to their old father’s house.”¹⁹⁵

7. *Perseverance along the road of honesty and virtue:*

Allow Don Orione to encourage you to remain firm in the right principles and, as always, may you ever be full of good will to walk the road of honest Christians and of virtue.”¹⁹⁶

8. *Respect for and cooperation with the work of Don Orione:*

“No-one is better able than you, dear Old Pupils, to understand and appreciate the good spirit that gives life to our modest labours. And you will certainly all feel with me a most earnest desire to cooperate, as much as you can, in that renewal of Christian life – ‘Restoring all things in Christ’ – through which the individual, the family and society can expect a restoration of the social order.”¹⁹⁷

9. *The task of taking on the burdens of our companions:*

“Let me finish then by exhorting you to help one another, and not only by the good example of a life that is truly Christian (...), but also, where you can, by deeds and by advice, either bettering your social position or by overcoming the difficulties and trials of life: that is

¹⁹² Lett. II. 289

¹⁹³ Lett. II. 289

¹⁹⁴ Lett. II. 290

¹⁹⁵ Lett. II. 289 - 290

¹⁹⁶ Lett. II. 291

¹⁹⁷ Lett. II. 291

what the first Christians did.”¹⁹⁸

10. The protection of Don Orione:

“Don Orione thinks about you constantly, and prays for you and for your families. Remember me too, and pray for me, for Don Sterpi, for all your Superiors and Masters. We keep you in our hearts, as our dearest sons.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Lett. II. 291

¹⁹⁹ Lett. II. 291

APPENDIX

EDUCATIONAL CENTRES

*of the Little Work
of Divine Providence*

NAME OF CENTRE	PUPILS	LOCALITY
JARDIN Y COLEGIO PRIMARIO "DON ORIONE"	1001	BARRANQUERAS, ARGENTINA
COLEGIO "N. Sra. DIVINA PROVIDENCIA	409	BUENOS AIRES
COLEGIO PRIMARIO Y SEC. "DON ORIONE"	1306	BUENOS AIRES
ESCUELA PRIM. Y SECUND. "SAN PIO X"	1045	CLAYPOLE, BUENOS AIRES
INSTITUTO SECUNDARIO "DON ORIONE"	314	CLAYPOLE, BUENOS AIRES
COLEGIO PRIMARIO "EL AVE MARIA"	507	CLAYPOLE, BUENOS AIRES
ESCUELA ESPECIAL "MAMA CAROLINA"	134	CLAYPOLE, BUENOS AIRES
JARDIN Y COLEGIO PRIMARIO "DON ORIONE"	865	CORDOBA, ARGENTINA
ESCUELA ESPECIAL "DON ORIONE"	71	CORDOBA, ARGENTINA
ESCUELA PRIMARIA "OBISPO NIELLA"	455	ITATI, ARGENTINA
ESCUELA PROFESIONAL DE MUJERES	30	ITATI, ARGENTINA
COLEGIO "SAGRADA FAMILIA"	900	MAR DEL PLATA, BUENOS AIRES
COLEGIO PRIM. "JOSÉ MANUEL ESTRADA"	890	MAR DEL PLATA, BUENOS AIRES
COLEGIO INDUSTRIAL "PABLO TAVELLI"	550	MAR DEL PLATA, BUENOS AIRES
INSTITUTO SECUNDARIO "DON ORIONE"	380	MAR DEL PLATA, BUENOS AIRES
IMPRENTA "PABLO TAVELLI"	30	MAR DEL PLATA, BUENOS AIRES
COLEGIO PRIMARIO "DON ORIONE"	780	PRESIDENCIA R.S. PEÑA
INSTITUTO SECUNDARIO "DON ORIONE"	458	PRESIDENCIA R.S. PEÑA
PROFESORADO TERCARIO "DON ORIONE"	200	PRESIDENCIA R.S. PEÑA
ESCUELA ESPECIAL	52	PRESIDENCIA R.S. PEÑA
COLEGIO PRIM. Y SEC. "MONS. J. A. BONEO"	1560	ROSARIO, ARGENTINA
JARDIN Y COLEGIO PRIMARIO "D. ORIONE"	664	TUCUMAN, ARGENTINA
JARDIN Y COLEGIO PRIMARIO "SAN JOSE"	707	VICTORIA, BUENOS AIRES
INSTITUTO COMERC. Y IND." DON ORIONE"	701	VICTORIA, BUENOS AIRES
GUARDERIA "HOGAR ZANOCCHI"	160	VICTORIA, BUENOS AIRES
COLEGIO PRIM. Y SEC. "S. VINCENTE DE PAUL"	1361	VILLA DOMINICO, BUENOS AIRES
COLEGIO PRIM. Y SEC. "VALENTIN BONETTI"	1155	V. HIPODROMO, ARGENTINA
INSTITUTO "OBISPO LABBÉ"	370	IQUIQUE, CHILE
ESCUELA "DON ORIONE"	330	LOS ANGELES, CHILE
ESCUELA ESPECIAL "DON ORIONE"	72	LOS CERILLOS, SNTIAGO, CHILE
ESUELAIndustr. Y BASICA "DON ORIONE"	1530	LOS CERILLOS, SNTIAGO, CHILE
COLEGIO "DON ORIONE"	1300	QUINTERO, CHILE
ESCUELA ESPECIAL "FRAY AVE MARIA"	74	RANCAGUA, CHILE
SCUOLA MATERNA	90	QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES
CENTRO PROFESSIONALE "DON ORIONE"	180	BORGONOVO VAL TIDONE
ASILO E SCUOLA MATERNA "DON ORIONE"	80	COPPARO
CENTRO F. PROFESSIONALE "DON ORIONE"	140	FANO
CENTRE TECHNIQUE ET FOYER "D. MASIERO"		BONQUA, IVORY COAST
ST. JOSEPH'S VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE	95	ZARKA, JORDAN
ISTITUTO "DON ORIONE"	62	BOTTICINO SERA
SCUOLA MATERNA "DON ORIONE"	40	FUMO DI C. S. QUIRICO
SCUOLA PROFESSIONALE "BERNA"	309	MESTRE
SCUOLA MEDIA "BERNA"	88	MESTRE
SCUOLA MATERNA "DON ORIONE"	78	MILAN
COLLEGIO "SAN GIORGIO"	445	NOVI LIGURE
COLLEGIO "DANTE ALIGHIERI"	454	TORTONA
SCUOLA ELEMENTARE "JEAN XXIII"	520	ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR

NAME OF CENTRE	PUPILS	LOCALITY
SCUOLA PROFESSIONALE "LUIGI ORIONE"	223	ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR
SCUOLA DI TAGLIO E CUCITO	220	ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR
COLLEGE "ST. PAUL"	520	FARATSIHO, MADAGASCAR
SOCIETATE DE BENEFACERE "D. ORIONE"		ORADEA, ROMANIA
OBRAS SOCIAIS (CRECHES-SURGERY)	140	ANANINDEUA, BRAZIL
COLEGIO "SANTA CRUZ"	1200	ARAGUAINA, BRAZIL
ESCOLA PAROQUIAL "SAGRADO CORAÇÃO"	600	ARAGUAINA, BRAZIL
ESCOLA PAROQUIAL "LUIZ AUGUSTO"	1550	ARAGUAINA, BRAZIL
ORIENTAÇÃO PROFESSIONAL DO MINOR	30	BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL
ESCOLA POPULAR NOTURNA	150	BRASILIA, BRAZIL
COLEGIO "DIVINA PROVIDENCIA"	650	RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
COLEGIO "DOM ORIONE"	1480	TOCANTINOPOLIS, BRAZIL
ESCOLA DE 1º GRAU	480	NAZARE, BRAZIL
CENTRO DI FORMAZIONE PROFESSIONALE	125	AVEZZANO
CENTRO ADDESTRAMENTO PROFESSIONALE	60	MESSINA
CENTRO FORMAZIONE PROFESSIONALE	420	PALERMO
CENTRO FORMAZIONE PROFESSIONALE	105	PATERNÒ
CENTRO FORMAZIONE PROFESSIONALE	500	ROME
ISTITUTO "SAN FILIPPO NERI"	850	ROME
ESCOLA ESTADUAL DO P. C. "DOM ORIONE"		COTIA, BRAZIL
JARDIM DE INFANCIA	230	PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL
ESCOLA "DON ORIONE"	300	QUATRO BARRAS, BRAZIL
CENTRO EDUCACIONAL "DOM ORIONE" (CEDO)	300	SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL
COLEGIO "DOM ORIONE"	250	SIDEROPOLIS, BRAZIL
JARDIM INFANTIL PAROQUIAL	535	ESPARGOS – ILHA DO SAL, CAPE VERDE
ESCUELA ARTES GRAFICAS "DON ORIONE"	37	MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY
COLEGIO "S. JOSÉ" Y ESCUELA MATERNA	250	MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY
CENTRO EDUCATIVO "DON ORIONE"	500	MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

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