

**ARTICLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM**  
**EDUCATION – A PATH TO LOVE**  
**CO-DIRECTED BY THE PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE HOLY SEE TO**  
**UNESCO AND THE CENTRE FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP OF**  
**FORDHAM UNIVERSITY NEW YORK**

Mr John Lydon, Assistant Headteacher of Salesian School, Chertsey, was invited to participate in the above Conference which took place on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November 2006 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. Mgr Francesco Follo, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to UNESCO, opened the Symposium by stating that its purpose was to offer points of reflection and action for the educational activity of the Catholic Church. Quoting Don Bosco's maxim "honest citizens and good Christians" and the trinomium of reason, religion and loving kindness, he highlighted the Church's role in the promotion of justice, reflecting on Pope Benedict's recent encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* in which the Pope speaks of "the new religious orders founded in the nineteenth century to combat poverty, disease and the need for better education."<sup>1</sup> The theme of the education of the whole person dominated Mgr Follo's and all subsequent addresses throughout the symposium. There followed three keynotes:

1. Mr Boutros Boutros-Ghali former Secretary General of the United Nations
2. Cardinal Edward Egan – Archbishop of New York
3. Cardinal Zenon Grocholewsky – Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education

In examining the relations between education and globalisation, Mr Boutros-Ghali suggested that "the success or failure of nations in this new world will be linked to their capacity to adapt and strengthen their educational systems." He went on to claim that there is an indissociable link between education and development. The objective of education for all will be achieved only by the strengthening of international

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI (2006), *Deus Caritas Est*, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

cooperation and solidarity. In response to Mr Boutros-Ghali, Professor Gerald Grace of the Institute of Education, who has addressed Salesian Conferences in the past, outlined the ways in which the Catholic Church has, through its educational provision, assisted the crucial work of development across the globe, pointing out in particular the way in which the Church in India has provided education for the most marginalized sectors of Indian society.

Cardinal Edward Egan began with the story of a famous American artist, Lionel Hampton, who emerged from a background of poverty to perform at every Presidential inauguration from Harry S Truman to George W Bush. Throughout his life Hampton claimed that Mother (now Saint) Katherine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of St Joseph, was the catalyst of his success by recognising his musical talent and ensuring that teachers provided extra-curricular support. He then developed the theme of education as a pathway to love by emphasising that Catholic education has over the centuries been properly directed towards the formation of the whole person. It is, of course, deeply interested in developing the intellect of its students and their ability to judge and analyse effectively. It does, however, not stop there. Catholic education, concerned as it is with the whole person, aims at strengthening the will, providing guidance for the emotions and aesthetic inclinations and addressing the spiritual needs of the individual. Cardinal Egan then spent some time articulating the challenges of the ever increasing laicism, more commonly known as secularisation, reminding his audience of the recent claim of Pope Benedict XVI that there has been a visceral denial of any public dimension for Christian values.

Cardinal Grocholewsky began his address by stating clearly that academic formation risked being reduced to the acquisition of empirical knowledge and the scaffolding of

competencies. In essence he was speaking about the challenges of contextual reductionism, a process of abstracting the scholarly and measurable performance indicators of a school from its own history and cultural formation, from its social and economic community setting and from its relation to wider society. He spoke, rather, of the need for a holistic approach to education, an approach canonised in Vatican documents on Catholic education.<sup>2</sup>

In articulating the need for the education of the whole person, the Cardinal's address was dominated by the themes of presence and rapport. While recognising that to educate has never been easy, he suggested that addressing this issue demands a particular style of educative presence. Just being with students is not enough. It is how you are with them and the relationship you subsequently manage to establish with them that counts. The Cardinal went on to claim that such presence must take account of the way in which teachers hold students in regard, how they join in their games, are aware of their sadness, anger and joy.

The Cardinal then went on to speak of the preventive system of St John Bosco as a paradigm for effective presence. In speaking about Bosco's emphasis on the importance of rapport and the need for effective presence in the form of constructive engagement the Cardinal suggested that:

“Don Bosco talks of affection, that is to say a love that is shown with spontaneity, sincerity and discretion. This saint reiterated that it is not enough to wish the young people well, they must also feel that they are loved. He knew that it is easier to teach than to educate. To teach all you have to have is

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<sup>2</sup> see *The Catholic School* (1977) n.31 ‘Precisely because the school endeavours to answer the needs of a society characterised by depersonalisation and a mass production mentality which so easily result from scientific and technological developments, it must develop into an authentically formational school, reducing such risks to a minimum.’

knowledge, to educate to have to be. To be a good teacher, didactic preparation is simply not enough. The passion to educate is necessary and with it you must believe completely and totally in the growth of these young people as human beings.”

Relating his thoughts specifically to the theme of the Conference, *Education – A Path to Love*, the Cardinal suggested that all education, including school education must be given with love. This love displayed by the adult and perceived by the pupils constitutes the foundation of a true formative relationship. It is without doubt the most important fact in education, including education in schools. He again quoted the example of St John Bosco together with St Francis de Sales, Bosco’s inspiration in the context of *amorevolezza*, and the philosopher of education Heinrich Pestalozzi:

“Let us think about what Don Bosco<sup>3</sup> said: ‘education is a matter of the heart’ or Saint Francis de Sales<sup>4</sup> : “He who wins the heart of man wins man himself. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi<sup>5</sup> (1746-1827) who knew all too well the heartaches and the joy of education said : Whether we are talking about the development of the character or the acquisition of knowledge, goodness and love must be at the root of everything, it is the all powerful force.”

In an evocative conclusion, the Cardinal suggested that for education to be effective, it must be delivered within the context of love. In speaking about the heart as the core of the human person, the Cardinal’s words reflected Jesus’ reference to the pure of heart in the Sermon on the Mount, pure in this context being connected with the ‘sound eye’ and Jesus’ exhortation to ‘be perfect’, all linked by the common thread of a clear vision,

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<sup>3</sup> G.BOSCO, *Dei castighi da infliggersi nelle case salesiane, in Scritti pedagogici e spirituali* (Edited by J. Borrego et al) Rome, 1987 p.259

<sup>4</sup> F. DE SALES, *La Filotea o introduzione alla vita devota* (Edited by D Marracini), Turin, 1944, p.171

<sup>5</sup> J.H. PESTALOZZI, *Lettere sull’educazione della prima infanzia, in Scritti scelti di J.H. Pestalozzi*, (Edited by E.Becchi), Turin, 1970, p.486

a singleness of purpose in the context of values based on the command to love. The Cardinal referred to the Little Prince of Saint-Exupery in expressing the idea that a clear vision oriented towards Christian values originates in the heart of the human person:

“Farewell says the fox. Here is my secret. It is very simple. **You can only see the truth with your heart.** The essential cannot be seen with the eyes alone. These words from the Petit Prince of Saint-Exupery invites us to never forget the essential. It is always necessary to look for what is beneath the surface, beyond the norms and fashion of the day. Young people expect their teachers to take care of them, to handle them with care, delicacy and tenderness, allowing them to grow towards Communion, sharing and love and gain full awareness of themselves. Was this not the secret gift that John Paul II had which attracted him to so many young people?

Cardinal Toppo, President of the Conference of Indian Catholic Bishops, brought the Symposium to a close by again referring to the educational legacy of St John Bosco. He spoke of Don Bosco’s exhortation to make students feel that they are loved as the abiding characteristic of the preventive system. He then reiterated one of Cardinal Grocholeyky’s themes by asserting that education that fails to challenge the students’ central convictions is simply training. He then linked the Church’s emphasis on the formation of the human person with the four pillars outlined by Jacques Delors,<sup>6</sup> former President of the European Commission:

- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to live together

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<sup>6</sup> Delors was Chair of the UNESCO Commission

- Learning to be

The Cardinal concluded that, taken together, the four pillars and the approach to formation of the Catholic Church constituted the clearest expression of the goal of education, that is, the education of the whole person.