

**THE EDUCATIONAL
AND CULTURAL WORK
OF THE S. PAOLO INSTITUTE
OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

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The S. Paolo Institute of Religious Studies in the Diocese of Pozzuoli, Naples, represents the first attempt in Italy at collaboration between the F.I.D.A.E (Federation of Educational Institutes) and a diocese, in the area of training and of providing lay teachers of religion in schools with religious and professional qualifications.

The Institute offers a three-year course which provides a structured and extensive treatment of theology and philosophy with a special stress on anthropological and educational studies. The course aims to enable students to make a personal synthesis of Catholic doctrine so that they may become competent to undertake pastoral care in the Church and in society.

The S. Paolo Institute of Religious Studies in the Diocese of Pozzuoli was officially recognised by the Italian Bishops' Conference on July 8th 1986. This recognition was renewed on July 16th 1990 for a further 3 years. During all these years, the Institute has successfully pursued its aims, progressively improved its service of the Church, and breathed new life into the religious, cultural and civic traditions of the region.

In accordance with its statutes approved by the Italian Bishops' Conference, the Institute lays particular stress on the following areas:

(a) The pastoral ministry: It prepares students for ecclesiastical ministries up to the diaconate. It offers training to lay people, religious and Sisters.

(b) Pedagogy and educational methodology: It trains students to teach the Catholic faith in public, State and non-State schools in accordance with the Concordat agreement, dated December 14th 1985.

(c) Education: It offers courses in pastoral theology and in the psychological and pedagogical aspects of educational methodology. These courses are available to lay teachers as well as to men and women religious, whatever their academic specialisation, and whether they are actually teaching, or waiting to be employed or to do support work in a Catholic school, of whatever sort or level, in the Region of Campania.

The F.I.D.A.E in Campania, in response to the requests and appeals made by Vatican II (1), the Holy Father and the Synod of Bishops (2), the Congregation for Catholic Education (3), the Italian Bishops' Conference, to the local Churches and associations (5) that they should cater for the initial and ongoing training of teachers in Catholic schools, had set up two-year courses in religious and professional training as early as 1983, in order to offer the teaching staff of associated Catholic schools structured and gradual means of qualification.

From 1986, these courses became an official part of the educational studies programme at the S. Paolo Institute of Religious Studies.

Some special characteristics of the S. Paolo Institute

Besides the general and statutory aims of all Institutes of Religious Studies, the S. Paolo Institute has as its specific and special aim the religious and professional training of lay people and lay religious working in Catholic schools who in the near future will be the leading exponents of Christian education.

The vocation of a Catholic lay teacher is so rich and profound in terms of everyday life and work that it needs to be based on well-structured and thorough training, on both a religious and professional level, and backed up by relevant diplomas. In this way the traditional ecclesial dimension of educational work will be restored and a new future for Catholic schools will be assured.

For this reason, greatly strengthened by the beneficial collaboration of the F.I.D.A.E and consequently also drawing on the centuries-old educational and pedagogical traditions of Orders and religious teaching congregations, the Institute has become a point of reference for all who wish to bring to maturity their educational vocation and mission.

The S. Paolo Institute offers in particular:

(a) The consideration and thorough study, on a personal and a community basis, of the Christian vision of life, the world and culture.

(b) The thorough study of the vocation and mission of the lay Catholic teacher as a witness to the faith in school.

(c) The systematic and critical study of aspects of education, with special reference to the Christian tradition of education, with a view to achieving a consistent, evaluated, historically based and dynamic view of the integrated education of the individual.

(d) The formulation and evaluation of the "Educational Programme" of a Catholic school, the unifying criterion of all educational choices and approaches.

(e) The acquisition of competence in various aspects of education, pedagogy, psychology and sociology, drawing in particular on the centuries-old experience of the Church, its Magisterium, and on the "educational charisms" of religious orders and congregations devoted to the education of youth.

The Catholic Lay Teachers Movement (M.E.L.)

This is a teachers' association which came into existence in the S. Paolo Institute and which shares in the Church's mission of evangelisation.

The purpose of the M.E.L. is the integrated education of young people, especially the poor, in particular in the specific context of schools, but also through other forms of instruction and education which respond to the signs of the times.

The Catholic Lay Teachers Movement seeks to provide a courageous response to the pressing need for the religious and professional training of new teachers. This is not a concern which arises only from the decrease in priestly and religious vocations dedicated to education, but from the deep conviction that schools and education constitute a special context for those who wish to witness to their faith in the service of youth on the threshold of a new millennium.

The Catholic Lay Teachers Movement (M.E.L.) seeks to provide a courageous response.

The members of the M.E.L. consider their profession as an "educational ministry" because, called by God, they have chosen to dedicate their lives to the

integrated education of babies, children, adolescents, youths and adults.

Membership of M.E.L. presupposes:

- (a) the lay state
- (b) the vocation to the "educational mission"
- (c) a diploma in religious studies
- (d) a degree or diploma qualifying the holder to teach
- (e) willingness to be "together by association".

The members of M.E.L. are willing to pursue their mission as "ministers of education" "together and by association". Consequently each member exercises his apostolate by sharing with the others according to his own charisms:

- (a) the experience of God
- (b) fraternal relations with others
- (c) dedication to the "educational ministry"
- (d) research, update and comparison of educational and pedagogical methods
- (e) the dissemination of the "Christian educational programme".

The educational and cultural work of the S. Paolo Institute and of M.E.L., which reflects the prophetic charism of St John Baptist de La Salle, was begun and is directed by a Brother of the Christian Schools from the District of Rome. ●

References

- (1) Gravissimum Educationis, N8
- (2) Apostolic Exhortation "Christifideles Laici", N62: "It is necessary to train lay faithful so that they may dedicate themselves to educational work considered as a true and real ecclesial mission".
- (3) La Scuola Cattolica (1977), Nos.4; 37-43; 52; 54; 70-73; 78-80. Il Laico cattolico testimone della fede nella scuola (1982), Nos:1; 5-10; 27; 37; 40; 45; 56-59; 60-70; 79.
- (4) La Scuola Cattolica oggi in Italia (1983), Nos:37-38; 57.
- (5) Il Laico Cattolico...No.79. La Scuola Cattolica oggi...Nos.59-64.