

**THE SPIRITUALITY
OF THE EDUCATOR TODAY
(2/2)**

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3. The pedagogical-spiritual ministry of the educator

1. The great challenge for a Christian educator is how to respond with his life and his mission to a secular society, how to make a quality response to the expectations and demands of the present.

In general the Christian educator lives in a different, if not hostile, social environment which may at times be opposed to specific Gospel criteria.

The following text from the Church document *“The lay Catholic, witness of Faith in schools”*, sheds light on his mission: “His task as educator goes beyond that of a simple teacher, but it does not exclude that task...But the professionalism of every educator has a specific characteristic that gets its deepest meaning in the case of the Catholic educator: the communication of truth. Truth will always be a participation THE TRUTH, and the communication of THE TRUTH will always be a fulfillment of his professional life” (number 16).

Reading the truth in reality, telling the truth, interpreting truth and guiding students along the way of truth is to extend in a spiritual way his commitment to teaching, the same mission as “Christ the Prophet”.

The cited document reveals to us how the spirituality of the educator can be practiced through attitudes such as these: “Respectful liberty with others, conscious responsibility, the sincere search for truth, a balanced and calm criticism, solidarity with and service to mankind, sensitivity to issues of justice, consciousness of being called to be agents of change in a society which is in a continual state of transformation, an openness to the consciousness of his students toward transcendence and making them willing to accept revealed truth” (number 30).

4. The Latin American “Educational Body”.

In Latin America we have an ecclesial “Educational Body” which received a mandate 30 years ago with the publication of the Vatican II (1965) document *“Gravissimum Educationis Momentum”* and has since gone through three Episcopal Conferences: Medellin in 1968, Puebla in 1979 and Santo Domingo in 1992. These have all spelled out the goals for our continent.

The Medellin conference awakened our consciousness, promised us hope and indicated to us a “liberating education” as an attitude more in tune with the integrated development of our peoples.

Puebla, whose focus was the “evangelization of Latin America in the present and in the future” urged us toward an “evangelizing education”, directed at the humanization and personification of mankind.

The focus of Santo Domingo was the “New Evangelization, human promotion and Christian culture” and it urged us toward a “Christian Evangelizing Education” as the new commitment.

From these three conferences a new school was born: the prophetic school, the evangelizing school, the integrating school so that we Catholic educators would fulfill a coherent and global program where faith, culture and life would flourish harmoniously.

Within this multi cultural space it was up to us to live our spirituality and prepare students adequately for living in social, political and economic realities that they would necessarily find in a culturally diverse and complex context in the future.

5. I would like to end by pointing out two types of utopia:

1. Serious and responsible participation in curricular guidelines as methods to achieve success in education.
2. Continuing formation or enabling as a way to be prepared facing the new Christian demands.

First Utopia:

One of the most serious responsibilities of the spiritual attitude of the educator is his participation in Educational Reforms with respect to curricular guidelines as well as the methods for achieving these. As of 1995 there have been some 68 educational reforms worldwide and today 45 countries are considering further reforms. In the majority of Latin American countries that have undergone educational reforms, there has been present an ecclesial line of thought and this line of thought is still present today in the countries that are presently undergoing reforms.

After these reforms, countries design curricular guidelines and the means necessary for achieving these and it is there where the “curriculum” that is reflected in the national and international educational programs

should stamped with the spirituality that we earlier defined, in the words of Jean Marie Thouard, as “that which embraces all of life in its goals, aspirations and practices and in its decisions”, so that the new life of the Latin American might be formed based on an ethical and spiritual school curriculum that begins with the reality of the nation and which manifests a tendency toward freedom, a tendency that generates and empowers life, that denounces injustice and that establishes new and lasting human relationships based on the three main principles of spirituality: beauty, goodness and truth. What a challenge”

Second Utopia:

The second utopia deals with our continuing formation.

The Spanish theologian and thinker Olegario González de Cardedal correctly states: “those who deal with youth deal with the future, but an educator who does not look toward the future has nothing to say to young people”. And today it is widely believed that an educator who stops reading not only is uninformed but is teaching falsehoods. Personal perfection is not merely in new knowledge, new thinking, new technologies, but also and especially in spiritual growth that does not include only one stage of life but life itself; if we deny ourselves to opportunity to continue growing, we opt for dying.

There is an outstanding moment in the life of all educators and of all persons, when one says to oneself: “I refuse to live in the midst of mediocre spiritualities, now I am going to live my own spirituality in a very deep way, I am sowing my own seed in the ground in order to reap another harvest for humanity”.

These two types of utopia are two challenges in which we should all be engaged and to which we should all be committed: every teacher, every school headmaster, every board of trustees, every academic or pastoral committee, every national educational confederation and all of its subsidiaries, all religious communities who dedicate themselves to education, every Episcopal conference, municipal and department ministers of education and culture; there need to be a basic commitment for a curriculum based on ethics and

for a deep ethical and spiritual formation for teachers. These two means, which I submit as the moral obligation and conclusion of this article, must become the essential focus, the only norm that will save the future of the Catholic school today.

6. Three conclusion:

First, there is a basic need today for the formation of teachers, both as Christians and in their most profound spirituality, given the critical educational time that our society is going through today.

Second, this is the optimum time even though the crisis may be difficult and harsh; and at the same time, it is a time filled with possibilities, searching for a lost identity or a new identity. This is a “Kairos” moment, a time in which God is present in our history and the history of our educational mission.

Third, nothing is easy since nothing important or great has been built in a moment’s time. It is necessary to learn from failures and successes.

Our faith and our trust in the Spirit of the Lord, Jesus the Teacher, allows us to recite this canticle from the Frenchman Joseph Folliet:

“At the end of the road, there is no more road,
but the end of the pilgrimage.

At the end of the climb,
there is no more climbing,
but the summit.

At the end of winter, there is no more winter,
but the spring.

At the end of desperation,
there is no more desperation,
but hope.

At the end of the night, there is no more night,
but the dawn.

At the end of death, there is no more death,
but LIFE AND SPIRITUAL LIFE” . •