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Pope to Piarists: Teach respect for persons and creation

Pope Francis writes to the head of the Order of Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools (Piarists) on the occasion of the online Working Seminar on the Global

Educational Pact. He invites the Piarists to renew in themselves the commitment and enthusiasm of their founder, St Joseph Calasanctius.

By Christopher Wells

“Consecrated life has always been at the forefront of the educational task,” says Pope Francis in a letter to Pedro Aguado Cuesta, the Superior General of the Piarists, on the occasion of a seminar on the challenge of rebuilding the global education pact.

The working seminar, organised by the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) and the Union of Superiors General (USG), taking place 12-14 November, is being held online due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The role of religious in education

In his letter, Pope Francis noted the role religious men and women have traditionally played in education. He pointed to the example of the Piarists’ founder St Joseph Calasanctius, the first to provide free schools to the poor.

Over time, the Pope said, “different charisms have emerged in all periods of history, which, by God’s gift, have understood how to adapt to the needs and challenges of every time and place.”

Today, the Church calls on the Piarists “to renew that purpose within [their] own identity,” the Pope said, thanking them “for taking up this witness with such commitment and enthusiasm.”

Lines of concrete action

Earlier this year, in a [video message](#) to a Meeting held at the Pontifical Lateran University on the Global Compact on Education, the Holy Father had laid out seven essential commitments of the project. In his letter on Thursday, Pope Francis compressed those commitments into three lines of concrete action: to focus, to welcome, and to involve.

“Focusing on what is important means to put the person at the centre” of our efforts, the Pope said, helping young people to grow and mature, to find their place in the world. “Valuing the person makes education a means for our children and young people to grow and mature, acquiring the skills and resources necessary to build a future of justice and peace together,” he explained.

“To achieve this,” he continued, “we need to be welcoming.” This entails listening, including listening to children as well as going beyond “our educational circle.” Welcoming also implies helping children to learn to work together with others, and fostering “an empathetic attitude that rejects the culture of discarding.” He added that it is also important that children “learn to safeguard our common home.”

Pope Francis said, "The last line of action, to involve, is decisive." Listening, he explained does not mean simply hearing and forgetting, "but must be a platform that allows everyone to be actively involved in this educational work." It means "working to give children and young people" the tools to understand challenges and propose and work toward solutions that will benefit the whole human family.

An essential part of education

Concluding his letter, Pope Francis assured Father Aguado Cuesta that he was accompanying the efforts of the Institutes represented at the seminar, as well as those of all those working in the field of education, whether consecrated or lay. He prayed that God would continue to ensure that consecrated life remain "an essential part of the global educational pact in this historical moment."

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