On the occasion of the inauguration of the new office of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (FIUC), His Eminence Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education gave an online address for the members of the Federation, entitled "What the Church expects from Catholic Universities". The reflection starts from Pope Francis' video message for the launch of UNESCO's Mission 4.7 and the Global Compact on Education.

In December 2020, Pope Francis recorded a video message in which he paid tribute to a few academics involved in UNESCO’s Mission 4.7 and in the Global Compact on Education. In this video message, the Holy Father used a sentence I now want to quote to begin my address. He said: "Education is an act of hope that, from the present, looks to the future.". As you can see, our Pope’s sentence could epitomize our subject of the day, namely, looking to what we would want our Catholic Universities to become in the future, starting from the present—without, of course, forgetting our legacy from the past. Starting from the present requires therefore that we broaden our vision and listen to other points of view, as with a polyhedron. In other words, we can't limit ourselves to looking at Universities solely on the basis of our own reality. As with a polyhedron, we need to have many perspectives reflect the distinctiveness of Catholic educational institutions through the convergence of all outlooks or points of view. Our scrutiny today should therefore be multipronged and pluralistic, because it has to encompass the current situation of the Church, that of our Catholic Universities, the commitment of so many men and women.
opportunities for education for all, ... the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and... the free exchange of ideas and knowledge... for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other’s lives” (Preamble).

In our time, in which the global compact on education has broken down, I see with satisfaction that governments have recommitted themselves to putting these ideas into practice through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in synergy with the Global Compact on Education.

At the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals is the acknowledgment that quality education for all is a necessary foundation for protecting our common home and promoting human fraternity. Like the Global Compact on Education, Goal 4 also fundamentally commits all governments to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

The Global Compact on Education and Mission 4.7 will work together for the civilisation of love, beauty and unity. Allow me to tell you that you are the poets of a new human beauty, a new fraternal and friendly beauty, as well as of the preservation of the earth we tread. Do not forget the elderly and grandparents, bearers of the most decisive human values. Thank you for what you do and please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

by: Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office, 16 December 2020

women to the holistic formation of the person, the present circumstances of those disciples of Jesus who work in education and culture, and, last but not least, the commitment of those who support our institutions, in other words “the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone.” If we start from a present that includes all of that, our vision of the future will go beyond routine programming. It will become an act of hope. We have to strive for Catholic Universities to be good universities. But we must also bear in mind that this is not enough. In Pope Francis’s mind, Catholic Universities shouldn’t just deliver quality degrees and ensure the pursuit of ambitious careers for their students. As the Pope said in his World Day of Peace message of 2021, the Church wishes our institutions of higher learning to shine as world universities that, by offering their educational services, are in a capacity to “pass on a system of values based on the recognition of the dignity of each person, each linguistic, ethnic and religious community and each people, as well as the fundamental rights arising from that recognition.” In short, our hope is that our Catholic education can provide more. That it can be more deeply rooted in the Christian ethos and therefore more daring in the pursuit of truth. More culturally creative. More tuned to society: “more open and inclusive, capable of patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding.” And now, heeding the challenge issued to us by the Pope, I think it is appropriate for me to propose to explore a path toward the future. When looking to the future, I believe there are two essential dimensions that must be preserved and two other ones that it is incumbent on us to renew. There clearly are additional dimensions that we could discuss in this meeting or in another setting though. Reflection and participation for the good of our universities are welcome!

1. Identity

The first dimension a Catholic University cannot dispense with, either today or tomorrow, is its own identity. Without it, the university would stray away from its educational mission in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, and would become a degree factory. In this respect, the Apostolic Constitution Ex corde Ecclesiae defines a Catholic University as an academic community that is characterized 1) by a Christian inspiration, shared not only by each of its members but also by the university community as such; 2) by an ongoing reflection, enlightened by the Catholic faith, on the ever-growing treasure of human knowledge, to which the university seeks to contribute through its own research; 3) by its fidelity to the Christian message as expressed by the Church; and 4) by an institutional effort at the service of the people of God and of the human family in their journey toward the transcendental goal that gives meaning to life. Nevertheless, though our universities have reflected on their identity through study groups, publications, conferences, etc., we must open our eyes even wider, all the more so in this changing and unstable world. A few sources of temptation beguile our institutions today, and if we are not careful, we run the risk or giving in to them without realizing what we’re doing.

One source of temptation that pulls identity apart, and I’m referring here to Pope Francis’s thinking, is the institution’s pursuit of self-preservation— in other words, an excessive sense of introversion that hampers the educational impetus by turning away from reality. The pursuit of self-preservation transforms us into education civil servants, at the expense of the evangelizing action of the
University, to the point that this enlarges the distance between professors and students, among professors themselves, among students themselves, and between the Institution, the Church and society. In other words, the works and gestures of daily life disappear and we no longer feel that we are brothers and sisters. It is so easy for the various components of a university to become separate islands, and for the university to become an archipelago of loneliness!

Another source of temptation that undermines identity is self-referentiality, as often discussed by Pope Francis. Catholic Universities practice self-referentiality when, ultimately, they only trust their own forces and, as institutions, feel a certain degree of superiority. In this respect, it is worth reflecting on a speech the Pope gave last year in May, in connection with the temptation of self-referentiality. Let me read an excerpt from that speech: “The myth of Prometheus, suitable perhaps for other epochs, is no longer so for ours. We do not need titanic heroism, but a meek and patient brotherhood among ourselves and with creation. Life and history show, in fact, that we cannot be ourselves without each other and without others. In a world in which everything is closely interrelated, […] it is necessary to be creatively open to new, more integrated, shared itineraries, directly connected to people and their contexts.”

2. The mission.

The second dimension that a Catholic University cannot give up on, either now or in the future, is the mission that binds it to the great task of evangelization. According to Ex corde Ecclesiae, evangelization here should aim for “a public, persistent and universal presence of the Christian mind in the whole enterprise of advancing higher culture and educat[ing] all students to become people outstanding in learning, ready to shoulder society’s heavier burdens and to witness the faith to the world.” In a Catholic University, such a presence expresses itself, first and foremost, in a continuous, scientific dialogue between faith and reason. Today and tomorrow, it will be necessary to consolidate a credible compatibility between faith and reason. “Precisely faith and reason, when they go hand on hand, are able to enhance the culture of human beings, to impart meaning to the world and to build more humane, more brotherly societies that are therefore more filled with God.” We have to be alert to two distinct dangers: fideism and autonomous reason. Both are suspicious of each other, despise each other and claim to be unique. A Catholic institution of learning must beware of the aspiration to become a parish or a devotion group. Likewise, it must distance itself from the presumption of claiming that only some sciences accept the presence of faith while others are exempt. Pope Francis rightly said that “faith awakens the critical sense… Faith broadens the horizons of reason to shed greater light on the world which discloses itself to scientific investigation.” I will close on this dimension by expressing the wish that our Universities accept, as soon as possible, the Pope’s invitation to embrace the principle of interdisciplinarity, “not only in its ‘weak’ form as a simple multidisciplinary approach […] but also in its ‘strong’ form as cross-disciplinary, situating and stimulating all disciplines against the backdrop of the Light and Life offered by the Wisdom streaming from God’s Revelation.” Now that we’ve seen the dimensions that cannot be given up, identity and mission, I will briefly present those that need to be renewed today to sow the seeds of a promising future.

3. Dialogue

The first of these dimensions is dialogue. If indeed we followed Pope Francis’s magisterium, we could safely say that the invitation to dialogue pervades the entirety of his messages and addresses to all ecclesial communities and the world. Dialogue is a part of the constitutive dimension of every human being. All anthropologists and sociologists agree on this. People need dialogue. Their entire physical and spiritual being and actions are geared towards communication. For the educator and student of a Catholic University, dialogue is grounded and develops in the dynamic of the trinitary dialogue, in the dialogue between God and man and in the dialogue between people themselves. Hence Catholic institutions of learning, because of their ecclesial nature, are called upon to share dialogue as a constitutive component of their identity. In other words, they are invited to practice the grammar of dialogue, not as a technical expedient but as a substantive modality of relationship, as an expression of synodality. Catholic educational communities must be synodal. They must allow individuals to express themselves and humanly grow in a process of relationship of dialogue, through constructive interaction, through the demonstration of respect, through the acceptance of various points of view, through the fostering of trust in an atmosphere of genuine harmony. Pope Francis has indeed provided essential guidance.
toward promoting dialogue. This guidance points to the duty of identity, the courage of otherness and the sincerity of intentions. The duty of identity because it is impossible to engage in genuine dialogue on the basis of ambiguity or by sacrificing the good just to please others. The courage of otherness because those who are different, whether culturally or religiously, are not looked upon or dealt with as enemies but are welcomed as fellow travelers, with the authentic conviction that the good for each person resides in the good for all. The sincerity of intentions because dialogue, as a genuine expression of what is human, is not a strategy aimed at grasping ulterior motives but the path toward truth, which it is worth following with patience in order to turn competition into cooperation. We know that the goal of the teaching dispensed in our Catholic Universities is the holistic formation of the person. Well, dialogue, when it is properly channeled, can reinforce what persons have achieved and open their horizon by enabling them to surpass themselves and by helping them to build the social friendship and universal brotherhood that we’ve been expecting. Let’s not forget that if our educational institutions are not open to dialogue, they will inevitably become isolated, even if their educational project was inspired by Christian doctrine. Likewise, if our institutions busy themselves only with dialogue while forgetting their distinctive identity, they will end up as mere institutions that go where the wind blows. Virtue seeks for balance.

4. University pastoral care.
Since the beginning of Pope Francis’s pontificate, we have been invited to engage in a pastoral and missionary conversion. As a result, numerous episcopal conferences, religious congregations and various ecclesial institutions have promoted a reflection on the pastoral care conducted by each one of them. In some cases, structures have been renewed. In other cases, the message has been updated to reflect the sign of the times. Pastoral conversion, which we are called upon to engage in, aims to “make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself.” Yet not much has been done to promote university pastoral care. Some Catholic Universities still view pastoral care as just having a chapel, an image of Christ, of the Virgin or a saint. They see themselves as Catholic because they have a chaplain or a pastoral worker. In some other universities, signs of Christianity are simply absent. Therefore, if we want to see our future engaged in the fraternal society that we are calling for, we must reflect, while grounded in the kerygma, on what university pastoral care we need now that could shape the future. At any rate, it would be commendable if our Universities were to encourage and promote a renewed pastoral activity, in which the faith is embodied through daily actions, with significant moments of prayer, of reflection and of cultural nurturing. Pastoral care should take into account the fact that young people today seek social commitment. Volunteering is a school of life within the school itself. “There are many young people who are ready to commit themselves to initiatives of volunteer work, active citizenship and social solidarity. They need to be accompanied and encouraged to use their talents and skills creatively, and to be encouraged to take up their responsibilities. Social engagement and direct contact with the poor remain fundamental ways of finding or deepening one’s faith and the discernment of one’s vocation.” Another important element to keep in mind and deepen is the cultural dimension. Pope Francis’s suggestion to create a new dicastery bringing together culture and education is a challenge we will have to respond to together, by looking for more synergies and by taking more risks. Let me close with a wish for all the members of academic communities in our Catholic Universities. I hope that, starting from our present, with its advantages and inconveniences, we will be able to seriously think about the future. May all of us, as Pope Francis said in the video message I mentioned at the beginning, become the creators of “a new human beauty, a new fraternal and friendly beauty, as well as of the preservation of the earth we tread.”

Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça

Interview by Prof. Maria Cinque with Brother Juan Ojeda

"THE GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL PACT CHANGES OUR PERSPECTIVE AND UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION"

We publish an excerpt of a long interview by Professor Maria Cinque, Director of "Educare all'Incontro e alla Solidarietà" at the LUMSA, with Brother Juan Ojeda, Director of Educational Projects at OIEC (Office International de l'Enseignement Catholique), consultant to the Dicastery for Culture and Education and great collaborator and disseminator of Pope Francis’ Global Educational Pact.

[MARIA] Pope Francis and the Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, together call for the commitment of the whole society to education: what can you tell us about this?

[H. JUAN] We must be aware that only a few moments in history have civil society and the Church been in such agreement on the importance of education, that it must be reinvented and that it must be the basis for the re-founding of society. In September 2019, we had two important events: the launch of the Global Education Pact by Pope Francis; UNESCO launched ‘The Future of Education, Learning to Become’, which led to the publication of the report entitled ‘Re-imagining our futures together. A new social contract for education’ (2021). Furthermore, at the re-launch of the Global Compact on 15 October 2020, the Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, spoke, agreeing with Pope Francis on basically three points: First: how important and urgent it is to put the person at the centre. Second: we must involve everyone in building a Global Pact for Education. Third: we need to change education to change and improve society and people’s lives.

[MARIA] Not everyone is in favour of the Global Compact on Education: what are the reluctance and criticisms of those who oppose the GCE?

[H. JUAN] I would not focus on reticence and criticism; I believe that an effort must be made to continue to bring everyone together through openness to others, dialogue, active and humble listening, the ability to put oneself in the other’s place to understand them and to work together to build this common alliance. We live in a culture of fragmentation, we have difficulty understanding that everything is connected, that we are part of a whole. This does not contradict the uniqueness and value of each human person, the identity or the richness and vitality of each person. It is the lack of trust and excessive competitiveness that drives us apart and prevents us from working together. We need a network of schools, of educational institutions, capable of transforming lives and contexts through education. Improving education and the essence of the pact is to work together to generate a 'new social contract for education'. Education goes far beyond the limits of the school institution, which is why we must open up to the neighbourhood or the city, collaborating with parishes, neighbourhood associations, NGOs, cultural, sporting and artistic operators, entrepreneurs, the municipality; in other words, with everyone.

[MARIA] How will our world improve as a result of achieving and implementing the Global Compact on Education? What do we achieve with the Global Compact on Education?

[H. JUAN] With the Global Compact, Pope Francis changes our perspective and understanding of education. He urges us to look outside the school and academic curriculum. In this regard he tells us: ‘Educational institutions must open themselves to listening to life, to communities, to their sorrows and joys, to their memories and desires... and thus create other possibilities’. (Pope Francis, Scholas Occurrentes Congress, NY, June 2019). He urges us to go out to meet life, to touch it, not to stand on the balcony; to transform it and create from now on a more human, fraternal, supportive and sustainable world. It is urgent to act... We must not limit ourselves to ecstatic contemplation of the beauty of this message. Nor must we remain in mere speculation, in meaningless debates that get us nowhere, but we must set to work side by side to realise this local and global alliance.

[MARIA] What would be the main keys to building the local and global pact?

[H. JUAN] Many key words have already been said, but it is worth highlighting some of the main cores of the message. Alliance: we must count on everyone, involve all citizens, entities, organisations. Internal alliance: heart, mind, hand; provide holistic and comprehensive education. Village: we must weave the covenant from below, from the grassroots, in a participative, collaborative and progressive way. Global village: going from the local to the global, from the bottom up. Change: we do not live in a time of change but in an epochal change. Education has the power to change the world, to change the meaning of economics and politics. Service: To serve, Pope Francis says in Brothers All “means to care for those who are fragile in our families, in our society, in our country, on our planet. Service always looks at the face of the brother, feels his proximity, beyond the barriers of geography and space, ‘when he was far from him, how close he was to him,’ says the Pope quoting the Saint of Assisi.

[MARIA] What message comes out of the Meeting of Universities doing research and innovation in the 5 areas and Pope Francis?
Among the speakers was the Secretary of the DCE
Monsignor Cesare Pagazzi

EDUCATE TO TRUST

On 27 and 28 January at the LUMSA University, under the direction of Professor Giuseppe Tognon, the first of a series of Seminars organised by ACISE (International Group for Research in Catholic Education) on the theme of Trust in Education took place. This research is a response by Catholic researchers to the appeal of Pope Francesco’s Global Compact on Education, as we read in the introduction to the Seminar:

“Decidedly humanist and profoundly educational, the Global Compact on Education called for by Pope Francis is an invitation to all researchers in Catholic education to make a firm commitment. ACISE wishes to engage for three years in a research project on the educational and anthropological foundations of the Global Compact on Education, in active collaboration with Catholic educators, teachers and students’ organisations and with all researchers in Catholic education within the FIUC. Through this project, ACISE wishes to involve a large number of Catholic educational networks and enable the development of a charter of trust based on the educational and didactic principles updated in this research project”.

Among the speakers at this first seminar was the Secretary of the DCE, Monsignor Giovanni Cesare Pagazzi, who presented the theme ‘Sense of abandonment, consolation and trust’.

Starting from the idea that abandonment is part of the experience of trust, Mons. Pagazzi reviewed characters from literature (Waiting for Godot, The Plague, The Valley of Eden...), the thought of various philosophers (Nietzsche, Sloterdijk, Rank...) to conclude: “Behold, the dynamic between the sense of abandonment and consolation favours the non-rhetorical interpretation of trust, reliance and reliability: their light and warmth are not those of a sun visible 24 hours a day, since the sun also needs its night”.

GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION
AND SPORT

The "Associazione Polisportiva Dilettantistica Vigna Pia" (Rome) was one of the first sports organisations to join the Global Education Pact. In 2022, the coaches and managers received training on the Global Compact on Education from Fr. Ezio L. Bono, and last December a meeting with the Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, Monsignor Melchor de Toca, who spoke about ‘Alleducator’ (coaches and educators).

In January, an ‘Education Day’ was held with a training session for athletes on the theme ‘To educate is to give a second creation’. These activities show how the Education Pact not only concerns schools and universities, but also the world of culture, entertainment and sport.
2022 was an important year for the Global Compact on Education (GCE). The first two years, after the launch of the project by Pope Francis on 12 September 2019, were marked by the outbreak of the pandemic, which compromised the implementation of many planned activities. With the end of the health emergency, in 2022 many activities inspired by the Global Education Pact resumed at a great pace in many parts of the world, several of which have been communicated to the GCE Secretariat, published monthly in the Newsletters and collected now in this booklet. We are aware that numerous events of all kinds such as Conferences, Symposia, Study Days, meetings and celebrations are being held daily, and therefore we ask that they be communicated to our Dicastery in order to preserve their memory and to be able to spread good practices.

Important events in 2022 included the GCE International Convention that concluded on 1 June with a private audience with the Holy Father; the Pontiff’s various speeches and messages on the Global Education Compact; and Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin’s speech at the UN Summit on Education, where he presented the Global Compact on Education to all participants. The year 2022 saw another major event that also involved the GCE: the creation by the Holy Father’s will of the new Dicastery for Culture and Education with a new board of directors who enthusiastically undertook the commitment to carry forward the Global Education Compact project, expanding it beyond the horizons of the educational dimension to include the cultural dimension. We therefore invite not only Schools, Universities and educational institutions, but also cultural, sporting, recreational, artistic centres, etc. to embrace with renewed impetus the great project of Pope Francis for a global alliance between all educators in the world in order to educate not only the younger generations, but all people on earth, to universal brotherhood. The communication organ of the GCE has also undergone a transformation from “Newsletter” to “Journal” with the aim not only of informing, but also of educating, by making available the texts of the Holy Father and the Dicastery (and others) concerning the Global Educational Pact. Among the great events of 2023, we would like to highlight World Youth Day (WYD), which will take place in August in Lisbon, and which will see us committed to spreading the Global Educational Pact among the young people of the world gathered with the Holy Father. In addition to WYD, our gaze stretches towards the Jubilee of 2025, which will be a key stage in taking stock of the GCE. We wish everyone a fruitful work in the renewed spirit of the GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION: “A cultural alliance to rebuild the Global Education Compact”.

Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça

(From the Introduction to the Collection)
"We need a human narrative, one that speaks to us about us and the beauty that inhabits us". These words are taken from Pope Francis’ beautiful speech for the 54th World Communications Day dedicated to the theme of narration. [...] We all know the Pope's great attention to the theme of education, about which he has spoken about two hundred times in his ten-year pontifical magisterium. "Man," the Pope continues, "is a narrating being because he is a being in the process of becoming, who discovers himself and is enriched in the plots of his days. The tale, however, to be educational, must be a good tale. A good educator, the Holy Father seems to tell us, is a teller of good stories. And he, Francis, has shown himself to be a good educator by telling exemplary stories.

In the same discourse as above, he tells us that ‘remembering’ means taking to the heart, ‘writing’ on the heart, and cites admirable examples of ‘self-tales’ (autobiographies) that have educated entire generations, such as Augustine’s Confessions, Ignatius of Loyola’s Pilgrim’s Tale, and the Story of a Soul by Teresina of the Child Jesus. Also in pedagogy in recent decades, especially in the field of adult education, the methodology of autobiographical narratives has gained ground as a tool for reflecting on self, to tell one’s story, to self-educate and to educate. The new educational motto the Pope seems to suggest to us is ‘EVANGELIZING EDUCATING AND EDUCATING NARRATING’:

"Each of us knows several stories that smell of the Gospel, that have borne witness to the Love that transforms lives. These stories demand to be shared, told, brought to life in every age, in every language, in every medium" (idem).

In the year just ended, the Holy Father spoke on several occasions about the great project of the Global Education Pact, and as a good educator he evangelised and educated by telling good stories, talking about exemplary figures. The mythological hero Aeneas, who in fleeing from his burning city of Troy wanted to save his old father Anchises by carrying him on his shoulders and his little son Ascanius by taking him by the hand, teaches us that the good educator (like Aeneas) is the one who knows how to preserve the past (his father Anchises), and at the same time has his gaze turned towards the future (his son Ascanius). (Address to participants at the International Congress on the Global Compact on Education, 1-6-2022).

The heroine Europa, the big-eyed maiden, who made the gods fall in love with her, is an occasion to invite young Europeans to have big eyes that can look beyond the narrow limits of small Europe (Message to participants at the ‘EU Youth European Conference’ in Prague, July 2022).

Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, who was killed for not wanting to swear allegiance to Hitler, is an example for educating to fidelity to one's ideals and conscientious objection (idem). St Ursula, a woman of extraordinary beauty and strong character, is an example for educating people to be beautiful and to act firmly in the face of adversity (Message to participants in “Ursuline Global Education Compact”, 30-9-2022).

St John XXIII and Martin Luther King are narrated as models for educating for peace and always dreaming big: ‘I have a dream’ (Meeting with students of the ‘Schools for Peace’ network, 28-11-2022).

By looking at these protagonists we also learn to tell our own story in order to self-educate and educate "Yes, because no one is an extra on the world stage and everyone's story is open to possible change" (Address for the 54th G.M. of Communication).

And as our educator-narrator Pope reminds us, education will be the engine by which we change the world.

P. Ezio Lorenzo Bono, CSF
https://www.sacra-famiglia.it/index.php/news)