



## CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

(for Educational Institutions)

### Educating to fraternal humanism

Building a “civilization of love”  
50 years after *Populorum progressio*

### Guidelines

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#### Introduction

1. Fifty years ago, in the encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*, the Church announced to men and women of good will the global nature assumed by the social question[1]. The announcement did not merely suggest a broader look, able to embrace larger portions of humanity, but offered a new socio-ethical model. One had to work for peace, justice and solidarity, with a vision able to grasp the global horizon of social choices. The conditions of this new ethical vision had emerged a few years earlier, during the Second Vatican Council, with the formulation of the principle of global interdependence and the common destiny of all peoples on Earth[2]. In the following years, the value of such principles was confirmed several times. Modern man has repeatedly experienced that what happens in one part of the world can affect others, and that no one may *a priori* feel secure in a world in which there is suffering or misery. If, back then, one hinted at the need to look after the good of others as if it were one’s own, that same recommendation now becomes a clear priority for the political agenda of our civil systems[3].

2. In this sense, the encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* can be considered the policy document for the Church's mission in the era of globalization[4]. The wisdom that emanates from its teachings is still guiding today the thought and action of those who want to build the civilization of “global humanism”[5], offering – on the basis of subsidiarity – “feasible models of social integration” that arise from the fruitful encounter between “individuals” and “groups”[6]. This integration express the aims of the “Church that goes forth”, which “bridges distances [and] is willing to abase itself if necessary ...,

standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be”[7]. The contents of such humanism need to be experienced and witnessed, formulated and conveyed[8] in a world marked by many cultural differences, permeated by diverse visions of goodness and of life, and characterized by the coexistence of different beliefs. To realize this process – as Pope Francis says in his Encyclical *Laudato Si’* – “we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature”[9]. This document of the Congregation for Catholic Education aims to describe the main elements of an education to fraternal humanism.

## 1. Current Scenarios

3. The contemporary world, multifaceted and ever changing, is hit by multiple crises of different kind: economic, financial, labour; political crises including within participatory democracy; environmental and natural crises; demographic and migratory crises, etc. The phenomena triggered by these crises reveal their dramatic character every day. Peace is constantly threatened and, alongside traditional wars fought by regular armies, the insecurity generated by international terrorism is widespread, leading to feelings of mutual distrust and hatred and promoting the development of populist, demagogic sentiments, which are likely to exacerbate problems, thereby radicalizing the clash between different cultures. Wars, conflicts and terrorism are sometimes the cause, sometimes the effect of economic inequality and of the unjust distribution of the goods of creation.

4. From these inequities, poverty, unemployment and exploitation are generated. The statistics provided by international organizations provide a snapshot of the humanitarian emergency underway, which will also affect the future, if we measure the effects of underdevelopment and migration on young people. Neither are developed societies exempt from these dangers, since even there marginalization and exclusion have increased[10]. Worth mentioning is the complex phenomenon of migration, affecting the whole world, leading to both encounters and clashes of civilizations, both fraternal hospitality and intolerant, rigid populism. We are faced with a process which has been properly described as an epoch-making change[11]. It highlights a decadent humanism, often based on the paradigm of indifference.

5. The list of problems could be longer, but we must not overlook the encouraging opportunities that the world of today presents. The globalization of relations is also the globalization of solidarity. We have seen many examples of this on occasion of the great humanitarian tragedies caused by war or natural disasters: solidarity, as well as initiatives of support and charity, have involved citizens from all corners of the world. Similarly, in recent years, social initiatives, movements and associations have arisen in favour of a more equitable globalization, which is attentive to the requirements of people in need. Many of these initiatives are often taken, and supported, by citizens of well-off countries, who could enjoy the benefits of inequalities, but often prefer fighting for the principles of social justice with generosity and determination.

6. It is ironic that modern man has achieved important goals in knowing the forces of nature, science and technology and, at the same time, is lacking in ideas for adequate coexistence within society so as to give everyone an acceptable and dignified existence. What perhaps has been missing so far is the joint development of civic opportunities with an educational plan that promotes the reasons for cooperation in a united world. The social question, as [Benedict XVI](#) said, is now an anthropological question[12], which involves an educational component that can no longer be deferred. For this reason, one needs to have “*a new trajectory of thinking in order to arrive at a better understanding of the implications of our being one family; interaction among the peoples of the world calls us to embark upon this new trajectory, so that integration can signify solidarity rather than marginalization*”[13].

## 2. Humanizing education

7. “An expert in humanity”, as pointed out fifty years ago in the *Populorum Progressio*[14], the Church has both the mission and the experience to work out educational programmes adapted to current

challenges. Her educational vision is at the service of the achievement of the highest goals of humanity. These goals were anticipated in the Council's Declaration *Gravissimum educationis*: the harmonious development of physical, moral and intellectual abilities, aimed at the gradual maturation of a sense of responsibility; the conquest of true freedom; and positive and prudent sex education[15]. Within this perspective, it became clear that education should be at the service of a new humanism, in which the social person was willing to talk and work for the realization of the common good[16].

8. The requirements set out in *Gravissimum educationis* are still relevant today. Even though the anthropological notions based on materialism, idealism, individualism and collectivism are going through a declining phase, they still exert a certain cultural influence. They often understand education as an individual path of formation for civic life, in which different ideological currents interact and compete for cultural hegemony. In this context, the formation of the individual responds to other needs: the affirmation of consumer culture, conflict ideology, relativistic thinking, etc. One needs, therefore, to humanize education, that is, to make it a process in which each person can develop his or her own deep-rooted attitudes and vocation, and thus contribute to his or her vocation within the community. "Humanizing education"[17] means putting the person at the centre of education, in a framework of relationships that make up a living community, which is interdependent and bound to a common destiny. This is fraternal humanism.

9. Humanizing education also means to realize that we need to modernize the educational pact between generations. The Church always affirms that "good family education is the backbone of humanism"[18], and from there unfold the various implications of education at the service of the society, based on mutual trust and reciprocity of duties[19]. For these reasons, educational and academic institutions wishing to place the person at the centre of their mission are called to respect the family as the first natural society, and to put themselves at its side, in line with a correct understanding of subsidiarity.

10. A humanized education, therefore, does not just provide an educational service, but deals with its results in the overall context of the personal, moral and social abilities of those who participate in the educational process. It does not simply ask the teacher to teach and students to learn, but urges everyone to live, study and act in accordance with the reasons of fraternal humanism. It does not aim to create division and divergence, but rather offers places for meeting and discussion to create valid educational projects. It is an education – at the same time – that is sound and open, that pulls down the walls of exclusivity, promoting the richness and diversity of individual talents and extending the classroom to embrace every corner of social experience in which education can generate solidarity, sharing and communion[20].

### 3. A culture of dialogue

11. Vocation to solidarity calls people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to confront the challenges of multicultural coexistence. In global societies, citizens of different traditions, cultures, religions and world views coexist every day, often resulting in misunderstandings and conflicts. In such circumstances, religions are often seen as monolithic and uncompromising structures of principles and values, incapable of guiding humanity towards the global society. The Catholic Church, on the contrary, "rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions", and it is her duty to "proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God as the source of all grace"[21]. She is also convinced that such difficulties are often the result of a lacking education to fraternal humanism, based on the development of a culture of dialogue.

12. A culture of dialogue does not simply suggest an exchange of views, to know one another so as to mitigate the alienating effect of the encounter between citizens of different cultures. True dialogue takes place within an ethical framework of requirements and attitudes for formation, as well as social objectives. The ethical requirements for dialogue are freedom and equality: the participants in the dialogue must be free from their contingent interests and must be prepared to recognize the dignity of all parties. These attitudes are supported by the consistency with one's own specific universe of values. This results in the general intention to match actions with words, in other words, to link the ethical principles we proclaim (e.g. peace, fairness, respect, democracy, etc.) with social and civic choices. It is a

“grammar of dialogue,” as pointed out by Pope Francis, able to “build bridges and ... to find answers to the challenges of our time”[\[22\]](#).

13. In ethical and religious pluralism, therefore, religions can help coexistence within society, rather than hinder it. Starting from their positive values of love, hope and salvation, in an efficient and consistent context of relations, religions can significantly contribute to achieving the social objectives of peace and justice. In this perspective, the culture of dialogue supports a proactive design of civic relations. Instead of limiting religiosity to the private and confidential sphere of the individual, compelling citizens to live publicly only the ethical and legal norms of the state, it reverses the terms of the relationship and calls on religious beliefs to profess their positive ethical values in public.

14. Education to fraternal humanism has the weighty responsibility of providing a formation of citizens so as to imbue them with an appropriate culture of dialogue. Moreover, the intercultural dimension is frequently experienced in classrooms of all levels, as well as in universities, so it is from there that we must start to spread the culture of dialogue. The framework of values in which a citizen properly formed to dialogue lives, thinks and acts is supported by relational principles (spontaneity, freedom, equality, consistency, peace and the common good), which beneficially and decisively become part of educational and formation programmes of those institutions and agencies that nurture fraternal humanism.

15. The nature of education lies precisely being able to lay the foundations for peaceful dialogue and allow the encounter between differences with the primary objective of building a better world. It is, first and foremost, an educational process where the search for a peaceful and enriching coexistence is rooted in the broader concept of the human being – in his or her psychological, cultural and spiritual aspects – free from any form of egocentrism and ethnocentrism, but rather in accordance with a notion of integral and transcendent development both of the person and of society[\[23\]](#).

#### 4. Globalizing Hope

16. “Development is the new name for peace,” is how *Populorum Progressio* ends[\[24\]](#). That statement has found support and confirmation in the following decades, with clarifications about how to proceed with sustainable development from the economic, social and environmental standpoints. Development and progress, however, are still process descriptions, and do not say much about the ultimate ends of the socio-historical evolution. Far from exalting the myth of progress immanent to reason and freedom, the Catholic Church connects development to the announcement of Christian redemption, which is not an indefinite and futuristic utopia, but is already the “substance of reality”, in the sense that “the things we hoped for: everything, a true life, are already present in us”[\[25\]](#).

17. One needs, therefore, through the hope of salvation, to be living signs of the same. How can the message of salvation in Jesus Christ be spread in a globalized world? “It is not science that redeems man. Man is redeemed by love”[\[26\]](#). Christian charity proposes universalizing and inclusive social grammars. Such charity informs knowledge that, so imbued, it will accompany man in the search for meaning and truth in creation. Hence, the education to fraternal humanism must start from the certainty of the message of hope contained in the truth of Jesus Christ. It is up to education, then, to offer this hope to the peoples of the world, as a message conveyed by reason and active life.

18. Globalizing hope is the specific mission of education to fraternal humanism. A mission that is fulfilled through establishing educational and pedagogical relationships that form to Christian love, that create groups based on solidarity, in which the common good is connected virtuously to the good of each of their components, transforming the contents of knowledge in line with the full realization of the person and his or her belonging to humanity. It is precisely Christian education that can perform this most important task, because it “gives birth, it makes grow, it is part of the dynamics of giving life. And the origin of life is the most gushing spring of hope”[\[27\]](#).

19. Globalizing hope also means supporting the hopes of globalization. On the one hand, in fact, globalization has multiplied the opportunities for growth and opened up new social relations and new possibilities. On the other, in addition to some benefits, it has caused inequality, exploitation and, in a perverse way, has led some people to suffer a forceful exclusion from the flow of prosperity. A

globalization without vision, without hope, i.e. without a message that is both proclamation and actual life, is bound to produce conflict and to generate suffering and misery.

## 5. For a true inclusion

20. To fulfil their purpose, formation programmes geared towards education to fraternal humanism aim at some fundamental objectives. First, the main purpose is to allow every citizen to feel actively involved in building fraternal humanism. The instruments used should encourage pluralism, establishing a dialogue aimed at elaborating ethical issues and regulations. Education to fraternal humanism must make sure that learning knowledge means becoming aware of an ethical universe in which the person acts. In particular, this correct notion of the ethical universe must open up progressively wider horizons of the common good, so as to embrace the entire human family.

21. This inclusive process goes beyond the category of people living now on earth. Intellectual and technological progress has shown in recent years that the choices made in the present are able to influence the lifestyles, and in some cases the very existence of future citizens. “The notion of the common good also extends to future generations”[28]. The citizens of today, in fact, should be fraternal with their peers wherever they are, but also with the future citizens of the planet. Since “the problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis ... and we need leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations”[29], the specific task that education to fraternal humanism can perform is to contribute to building such a culture based on intergenerational ethics.

22. This means education extending the classical scope of its action. If, until now, the school has been considered as the institution forming the citizens of tomorrow, if the formative agencies responsible for lifelong learning deal with the citizens of the present, through education to fraternal humanism the humanity of the future – posterity – is taken care of, towards whom one must be fraternal by making responsible choices. This is even more true with respect to academic education, because it is by means of the same that one imparts the skills needed to make key choices for the natural balance of human-social, natural, environmental systems, etc.[30]. The themes developed in university courses, to that effect, should be focused on a key criterion for quality assessment: sustainability with respect to the needs of future generations.

23. To be truly inclusive, one must go further: establish a relationship of solidarity with the generations that came before us. Unfortunately, the consolidation of the technocratic paradigm has, in some cases, downplayed historical, intellectual and humanistic knowledge – with its literary and artistic heritage – whereas a correct view of history, along with the spirit with which our ancestors faced and overcame their challenges, can help man in the complex adventure of the present-day. Human societies, communities, peoples and nations are the result of chapters of history, by means of which a specific, ever-changing identity is revealed. Understanding the fruitful link between a community’s historical development and its vocation both to the common good and to accomplishing fraternal humanism implies the formation of a historical awareness, based on the indissoluble unity that brings ancestors, contemporaries and posterity to surmount their degrees of kinship, so that all are equally recognized as being children of the Father and thus in a relationship of universal solidarity[31].

## 6. Cooperation networks

24. As the encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* recommended working out “concerted programmes”[32], so today there is an obvious need to harmonize educational and research initiatives with the goals of fraternal humanism, recognizing that “they cannot be scattered and isolated, let alone opposing each other for reasons of prestige or power”[33]. Building cooperation networks, from the educational, didactic and academic points of view, means enabling inclusive dynamics, constantly looking for new opportunities to integrate different people in one’s teaching and learning circle, especially those for whom it is difficult to find a formation programme appropriate to their needs. Considering, in fact, that education is still a scarce resource in the world, and that there are people who

still endure a lack of suitable development institutions to rely on, the first commitment of education to fraternal humanism consists in self-socialization through the organization of cooperation networks.

25. Education to fraternal humanism develops cooperation networks in the various fields of education, especially within academic education. Firstly, it calls for educators to take a reasonable approach to collaboration. In particular, one must prefer joint efforts of the teaching staff in preparing their formation programmes, as well as cooperation among students as regards learning methods and formation scenarios. Moreover, as living cells of fraternal humanism, interconnected by an educational pact and intergenerational ethics, solidarity between teachers and learners must be ever more inclusive, plural and democratic.

26. The university should be the main breeding ground for forming people to cooperate in academic research, so that – within the framework of fraternal humanism – there is a preference for establishing joint research in all areas of knowledge, the results of which can be confirmed by academic objectivity in the application of suitable logic, methods and techniques, but also by the researchers' own experience of solidarity. It is a question of encouraging the formation of integrated research groups among teachers, young researchers and students, which also calls for cooperation among academic institutions operating internationally. Cooperation networks should be established between educational subjects and subjects of other kinds, for example from the professions as well as from the arts, commerce, business and all the organizations within society where fraternal humanism needs to be advanced.

27. There is widespread call for education to overcome the pitfalls of cultural standardization processes, which produce the harmful effects of homogenization, and, at the same time, consumer manipulation. The establishment of cooperation networks, within the framework of an education to fraternal humanism, can help to overcome these challenges, because it offers decentralization and specialization. In a perspective of educational subsidiarity, on both national and international levels, one must promote the sharing of responsibility and of experiences, which is essential for optimizing resources and avoiding risks. In this way, one establishes a network not only of research, but especially of service, where people help each other and share new discoveries, “exchanging teachers for certain periods and developing those initiatives that enhance their cooperation”[\[34\]](#).

## 7. OUTLOOK

28. Education and school and university education were always at the centre of the contribution of the Catholic Church to civic life. She defended the freedom of education when, in secular and secularist cultures, the space for forming people to religious values seemed to be shrinking. Through education, she continued to support the principles and values of public coexistence when modern societies, deluded by scientific and technological (as well as legal and cultural) achievements, believed the Catholic culture to be meaningless. Today, as in every age, the Catholic Church still has the responsibility to contribute, with her heritage of truths and values, to building a fraternal humanism for a world ready to accomplish what was foreseen in the encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*.

29. To give a soul to our ever-changing global world, the Congregation for Catholic Education gives new impetus to the priority of building a “civilization of love”[\[35\]](#), and urges all those who, by profession and vocation, are engaged in educational processes, at all levels, to live their experience with dedication and wisdom, in the name of the above-mentioned principles and values. This Dicastery – following the World Congress “*Educating today and tomorrow. A renewing passion*” (Rome-Castel Gandolfo, November 18-21, 2015) – therefore reinforces the reflections and challenges described by teachers, learners and parents, as well as by representatives of particular Churches, religious congregations and associations working in the vast domain of education.

30. We present these guidelines to all those whose daily challenge is to renew, with passion, the educational mission of the Church in the various continents. We also aim to provide a useful tool for engaging in constructive dialogue with civic society and with international organizations. Moreover, Pope Francis has established the Foundation “*Gravissimum educationis*”[\[36\]](#) with the aim of pursuing “scientific and cultural ends, intended to promote Catholic education in the world”[\[37\]](#).

31. In conclusion, the themes and horizons to be explored – starting from the culture of dialogue, globalizing hope, inclusion and cooperation networks – offer stimulus both for the educational experience and teaching as well as for studies and research. It will be necessary, therefore, to circulate information about these experiences and research results, so as to allow everyone involved in providing fraternal humanism to view their own experiences from the perspective of the total process of building a world based on the values of Christian solidarity.

*Rome, on the feast of the Resurrection, April 16, 2017*

Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, Prefect

Archbishop Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Secretary

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[1] PAUL VI, [Encyclical letter \*Populorum Progressio\*](#) (March 26, 1967), 3.

[2] Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution [Gaudium et Spes on the Church in the Modern World](#) (October 28, 1965), 4-5.

[3] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#) (2004), 167.

[4] For this reason, among others, [Populorum Progressio](#) has often been compared, in the importance of its message for social questions, to *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII: cf. John Paul II, [Encyclical Letter \*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis\*](#) (December 30, 1987), 2-3; Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter [Caritas in Veritate](#) (June 29, 2009), 8.

[5] [Populorum Progressio](#), n. 42.

[6] Cf. Pope Francis, [Address to the participants in the conference organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encyclical Populorum Progressio](#), April 4, 2017.

[7] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii Gaudium](#) (November 24, 2013), 24.

[8] “Love in truth — *caritas in veritate* — is a great challenge for the Church in a world that is becoming progressively and pervasively globalized. The risk for our time is that the *de facto* interdependence of people and nations is not matched by ethical interaction of consciences and minds that would give rise to truly human development”, BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical letter [Caritas in Veritate](#) (June 29, 2009), 9.

[9] Pope Francis, Encyclical letter [Laudato Si'](#), on Care for Our Common Home (May 24, 2015), 215.

[10] See UNICEF, *Rapporto sulla condizione dell'infanzia nel mondo 2016*, Unicef, Firenze 2016; UNICEF, *Figli della recessione. L'impatto della crisi economica sul benessere dei bambini nei paesi ricchi*, Unicef-Office of Research Innocenti, Firenze 2014.

[11] See INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION, *World Migration Report 2015 – Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility*, IOM, Geneva 2015.

[12] BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical letter [Caritas in Veritate](#) (June 29, 2009), 75.

[13] *Ibid*, 53

- [14] [Populorum Progressio](#), 13; See PAUL VI, *Speech to the United Nations Organization*, October 4, 1965.
- [15] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian Education [Gravissimum Educationis](#) (October 28, 1965), 1 B
- [16] *Ibid.*, 1.
- [17] Pope Francis, [Address to the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Education](#), February 9, 2017.
- [18] See Pope Francis, [Catechesis of May 20, 2015 on family and education](#).
- [19] *Ibid.*
- [20] Pope Francis, [Address to the attendants of the Global Congress “Educating today and tomorrow. A renewing passion” promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome](#), November 21, 2015.
- [21] Second Vatican Council, Declaration of the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions [Nostra Aetate](#) (October 28, 1965), 2, 4.
- [22] Pope Francis, [Address to the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Education](#), February 9, 2017.
- [23] See Congregation For Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools. Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, Vatican City 2013, 45.
- [24] [Populorum Progressio](#), 87.
- [25] Benedict XVI, Encyclical letter [Spe Salvi](#) (November 30, 2007), 7.
- [26] *Ibid.*, 26.
- [27] Pope Francis, [Address to the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Education](#), February 9, 2017.
- [28] Pope Francis, Encyclical letter [Laudato si'](#), on Care for our Common Home (June 18, 2015), 159.
- [29] *Ibid.*, 53.
- [30] See John Paul II, [Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae](#) (August 15, 1990), 34.
- [31] [Populorum Progressio](#), 17.
- [32] *Ibid.*, 50.
- [33] *Ibid.*
- [34] Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian Education [Gravissimum educationis](#), 12
- [35] The phrase “civilization of love” was used for the first time by Paul VI on May 17, 1970, in his address for Pentecost Sunday (*Magisterial writings*, VIII/1970, 506) and used several times more during his pontificate.
- [36] Pope Francis, [Chirograph of his Holiness for the Establishment of the “Gravissimum Educationis” Foundation](#) (October 28, 2015).
- [37] *Ibid.*

