

**EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE
TO THE MISSION
FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM
(1/2)**

Fr. Carlo Calori
Director of the Milan Higher Institute
of Catholic Education and Culture

We thank the author and the Pontifical Union of Missions for permission to publish this article which appeared in Omnis Terra, No. 230. The topic has particular significance for our educational ministry.

The term "apostolate", of Greek origin, finds its equivalent in the term "mission" from Latin. However, it must be stressed that mission differs from apostolate real and proper in its genre and form.

"Mission, in continuation of the mission of the Logos in a world without Logos, is that which brings Christ into a non-Christian world."

The goal of the mission is known from Sacred Scripture (Mt 28:18ss): The Risen Lord Jesus gave the command to make all peoples his disciples. A precise commitment to action is derived from this command which is made concrete in the "foundation of the Church" and in "her consolidation in time and space" in that "a disciple is not alone with regard to the person of the Master but also to the community of Jesus' disciples, his community of salvation."

From these observations it must be deduced that "the ultimate goal of the mission is the transplanting and expansion of the Church, gathered together by all peoples and which all peoples bring together in themselves in the perfect Kingdom of God at the end of time. Therefore, the mission is essentially a religious mandate in the non-Christian world. From this it follows that every activity in the area of the mission, and especially educational activity, must aim at the spiritual, religious formation of future and new Christians." (1)

The natural right of the mission is rooted in the truth of the Gospel and is derived from the mandate to preach "given by God to his Church. No one can impede things which are to people's advantage from being conveyed to them." (2)

The mission also has behind it a precise dogmatic foundation constituted by the "very power granted by Jesus Christ to his Church and the magisterial office of teaching." Such power consists in this: the Church, and she alone, has the right and duty to be guardian of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, entrusted to her, to disseminate and defend it, to preach and propose it autonomously to all men, regardless of any human power, and that people have the duty to accept, believe and practice it.

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation. The man who believes in it and accepts baptism will be saved; the man who refuses to believe in it will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)

It is the Church's duty to teach everyone; no one has the right to impede the Church from accomplishing this duty, by command of Jesus Christ." (3)

The duty to spread the Kingdom of Christ falls upon all believers in Christ. In fact "being Christian means being, at least morally, obliged to take part in the conversion of the world. This is easily understandable if we consider:

- a) that Jesus Christ gave us the faith so that we would share it with our brothers and sisters;
- b) that Jesus Christ died to save everyone and therefore we cannot remain indifferent before the possibility that so many persons may not be saved because they do not know Jesus Christ;
- c) that if we love Jesus Christ, we must want and cooperate so that also those who do not know him will love him;
- d) that if it is a duty of charity to carry out works of mercy, it is also a greater duty to aid in evangelization in that the soul is worth more than the body. Therefore, the faithful cannot, without sinning, make themselves extraneous to missionary cooperation." (4)

**Catholic education in relation to the formation
of missionary conscience**

If it is true, as it is, that the faithful would sin if they did not give their active collaboration to the Church's missionary action, it is no less true that the faithful must be educated to carrying out this active cooperation.

In paraphrasing Willman's thinking (5), it can be stated that missionary education is the care that persons who are mature in the faith take in order to develop and shape those who have still not arrived at the faith or are not mature in it. In this way, the latter can in turn lead a life of adult faith autonomously and be capable on their part of contributing to the spread of Christianity. What has been said takes on a particular value and richness when the subjects to be educated to missionary action are in the so-called period of growth. "Being made of soul and body, man does not naturally develop like a plant and animal nor does he have an absolute freedom like a pure spirit. In order to develop his being fully and in an orderly way and acquire a sense of responsibility in life, he needs the help of other more experienced persons. This can take place in three ways:

- 1) in the form of care or stimulus in order to awaken latent energies in the young and make them grow;
- 2) in the form of formation to bind the developing spirit to the truth about being and the values of culture;

3) in the form of discipline and guidance in order to lessen exuberant energy in the framework of the moral order.

These three basic guidelines correspond to the three spheres of life, knowledge and aspirations, penetrate the entire educational process and tend to be increasingly interiorized. The stimulus goes from corporal life to the person's entire being. Formation tends to act in an ethical sense. Discipline, after making the precepts given by an external authority accepted docilely by awakening the moral conscience more and more, aims at gradually forming a person who acts freely and leads to the formation of conscience and the view about the world." (6)

What is stated about education in general can rightly be taken up and affirmed with regard to Catholic education which aims, in a subject in the period of growth, at forming the religious conscience in particular. Indeed "Catholic education draws its certainty and molding strength from faith in the true God, Creator and Savior, beginning and end of man" (7) and builds (if it is licit to say this) in the subject a clear vision about the world and an equally clear vision about man which are fundamental premises for the growth, in an individual, of a missionary conscience.

In fact, Catholic education presents the world as a reality that is intrinsically finished and therefore transitory. Whatever the world has that is true, real, good and beautiful has characteristics of imperfection and moves man to raise his glance toward God the Creator who is the origin of the world, archetype and end, and to aspire to the coming of the Kingdom of God itself.

On the other hand, "the relationship of tension between the body and spirit requires an education which will help the spirit to become aware of itself and master the whole human nature. A young person must become a person capable of acting morally, who does not use his or her freedom arbitrarily but in perfect harmony with natural law. This bond with the moral law in freedom protects the young person from haughtiness and enslavement. Full human perfection is found in the union of the natural and the supernatural. Through human sharing in the mystery of grace which wipes away original sin, education widens a person's scope of action: nature and earthly life are inserted into the elevating order of the supernatural." (8)

Educating to the Church is synonymous with educating to the mission

The most highly accredited anthropology states without any doubt that "man has an endowment and an end that share in the natural and supernatural order." The statement is laden not only with suggestion but, above all, with consequences.

In fact, from it must be deduced both logically and easily that "the supreme end is the formation of the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly and coherently under the guidance of sound reason enlightened by the supernatural light of the examples and teachings of Christ and with the supernatural help of faith, hope and charity. This ultimate end is fulfilled in the proximate and immediate ends which make the young person a capable and respon-

sible member of human society (...). Temporary and eternal ends are in close reciprocity whereby natural values, rather than being subordinated to a supernatural end, are strengthened and made noble by attaining their true form in the light of religion. This, therefore, is the essential nucleus of all education and must permeate all the educational norms." (9)

Alongside these certainties and convictions, in order to carry out a serious educational task of a missionary nature, i.e., one that is capable of making grow in young people full missionary awareness and an apostolic spirit, as is required by the Sacrament of Baptism and growth to adult faith from the Sacrament of Confirmation – in the subject to be educated by means of a sound missionary pedagogy – a basic attitude "must arise and develop" such as altruism, a sense of responsibility, a broad horizon. Anyone who takes these factors into consideration in education is already indirectly exercising a missionary pedagogy." (10)

All of this is true because the Sacrament of Baptism sets the bases ontologically in the subject's spirit of direct missionary education. In fact, Baptism makes us belong to the Church which – being catholic and apostolic – has the missionary spirit as its intrinsic characteristic in that her organism is the universal institution of salvation. The first form of missionary pedagogy is offered by educating the subject to prayer. The "Our Father" in particular is presented as an exquisitely missionary prayer because it has universal dimensions which are wonderfully expressed in "adveniat Regnum tuum" (Mt 6:10).

Education to conscious and responsible participation in the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice also has a great educational importance with a clearly missionary flavor. In fact, in every Mass, "through Christ's immolation for the salvation of humanity, the Church is once again established and realized. The more the Church lives in the heart of the faithful, the more the missionary spirit lives." (11)

Lastly, in the Sacrament of Confirmation, in receiving the Holy Spirit who is infused into the universe, the subject is made co-responsible in spreading the Kingdom of God and receives the supreme sanction to take part rightfully in the Church's missionary spirit which aims at evangelizing the whole world. From this it follows that education to the Church coincides in fact with missionary education which is indispensable for the full and overall formation of a faithful follower and imitator of Christ.

.../...

- (1) J. GLAZIK, *Mission in Dizionario di Catechetica* de Leopold Lentner (Italian edition by Luigi Pignatiello), Edizioni Paoline, Roma 1966.
- (2) Cf. *Dizionario del Cattolicesimo nel mondo moderno*, Italian edition by Pietro Rossano, Edizioni Paoline, Alba/Roma 1964, p. 442.
- (3) TAROCCHI Igino O.F.M., *Missioni in Dizionario di Teologia Morale*, directed by Francesco Roberti, Editrice Studium, Roma 1954, p. 844.
- (4) *Ibidem*.
- (5) Cited in *Dizionario del Cattolicesimo nel mondo moderno*, cit. p. 232.
- (6) *Ibid.* p. 232-233.
- (7) *Ibidem*.
- (8) *Ibidem*.
- (9) *Ibidem*.
- (10) J. DREISSEN, *Pedagogia missionaria*, in *Dizionario di Catechetica*, cit.
- (11) *Ibidem*.