



Passing on the faith and Christian values to younger generations



Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Passing on the faith and Christian values to younger generations through:

- education,
- the media,
- the witness of the community.

through education

- You have to teach persons who are poor wherever you find occasion to do so - not only the children in your schools, but all poor persons, whom you assist without distinction (Saint Vincent, November 2, 1655, CCD X, 118).
- Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere. Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life (*Laudato si*, 213).
- “Catholic schools should be encouraged in their mission to help pupils grow into mature adults who can view the world with the love of Jesus and who can understand life as a call to serve God.” For this reason, “the Church strongly affirms her freedom to set forth her teaching and the right of conscientious objection on the part of educators” (*Amoris laetitia*, 279).
- What are needed are new pathways of self-expression and participation in society. Education serves these by making it possible for each human being to shape his or her own future. Here too we see the importance of the principle of subsidiarity, which is inseparable from the principle of solidarity (*Fratelli tutti*, 187).
- Education, as we know, is meant to be transformative. To educate is to take a risk and to hold out to the present a hope that can shatter the determinism and fatalism that the selfishness of the strong, the conformism of the weak and the ideology of the utopians would convince us is the only way forward...

We consider education to be one of the most effective ways of making our world and history more human. Education is above all a matter of love and responsibility handed down from one generation to another (Pope Francis, October 15, 2020).

- Education is a dynamic reality, it is a movement that brings people to the light. It is a peculiar kind of movement, with characteristics that make it a dynamism of growth, aimed at the full development of the person in his/her individual and social dimension...

Never before has there been such a need to unite efforts in a broad educational alliance to form mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentation and opposition and rebuilding the fabric of relationships for a more fraternal humanity. To achieve these goals takes courage... to pay educators properly (Pope Francis, February 20, 2020).

through the media

- In a world like this, media can help us to feel closer to one another, creating a sense of the unity of the human family which can in turn inspire solidarity and serious efforts to ensure a more dignified life for all. Good communication helps us to grow closer, to know one another better, and ultimately, to grow in unity...

It is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply “connected”; connections need to grow into true encounters. We cannot live apart, closed in on ourselves. We need to love and to be loved. We need tenderness. Media strategies do not ensure beauty, goodness and truth in communication. The world of media also has to be concerned with humanity, it too is called to show tenderness. The digital world can be an environment rich in humanity; a network not of wires but of people. The impartiality of media is merely an appearance; only those who go out of themselves in their communication can become a true point of reference for others. Personal engagement is the basis of the trustworthiness of a communicator. Christian witness, thanks to the internet, can thereby reach the peripheries of human existence (Pope Francis, message for the 48th World Communications Day, January 24, 2014).

- Communication, wherever and however it takes place, has opened up broader horizons for many people. This is a gift of God which involves a great responsibility. I like to refer to this power of communication as “closeness” (Pope Francis, message for the 50th World Communications Day, January 24, 2016).

- The web and social networks have created a new way to communicate and bond. They are “a public square where the young spend much of their time and meet one another easily, even though not all have equal access to it, particularly in some regions of the world. They provide an extraordinary opportunity for dialogue, encounter and exchange between persons” (*Christus vivit*, 87).
- The present context calls on all of us to invest in relationships, and to affirm the interpersonal nature of our humanity, including in and through the network. All the more so, we Christians are called to manifest that communion which marks our identity as believers. Faith itself, in fact, is a relationship, an encounter; and under the impetus of God’s love, we can communicate, welcome and understand the gift of the other and respond to it...

The image of the body and the members reminds us that the use of the social web is complementary to an encounter in the flesh that comes alive through the body, heart, eyes, gaze, breath of the other. If the Net is used as an extension or expectation of such an encounter, then the network concept is not betrayed and remains a resource for communion. If a family uses the Net to be more connected, to then meet at table and look into each other’s eyes, then it is a resource. If a Church community coordinates its activity through the network, and then celebrates the Eucharist together, then it is a resource. If the Net becomes an opportunity to share stories and experiences of beauty or suffering that are physically distant from us, in order to pray together and together seek out the good to rediscover what unites us, then it is a resource (Pope Francis, message for the 53rd World Communications Day, January 24, 2019).

through the witness of the community

- You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).
Go and do likewise (Lk 10:37).
I handed on to you what I also received (Cf. 1 Cor 15:3).
How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news! (Rom 10:15)

- Faced with this contagious witness of joy, serenity, fruitfulness, the testimony of tenderness and love, humble charity, without arrogance, many people feel the need to “come and see” ...

The Church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world. [...] It is this witness I expect from you (*Rejoice*, 10).

- Evangelical radicalness is not only for religious: it is demanded of all. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way. It is this witness that I expect of you. Religious should be men and women able to wake the world up (*Rejoice*, 1).
- We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves (*Gaudete et exsultate*, 14).
- Group experience is also a great resource for sharing the faith and for mutual help in bearing witness. The young are able to guide other young people and to exercise a genuine apostolate among their friends (*Christus vivit*, 219).
- Youth ministry needs to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God (*Christus vivit*, 204).
- I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). This was Jesus’ heartfelt prayer to the Father: “That they may all be one... in us... so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). Beware of the temptation of jealousy! We are all in the same boat and headed to the same port! Let us ask for the grace to rejoice in the gifts of each, which belong to all (*Evangelii gaudium*, 99).
- Of course, all of us are called to mature in our work as evangelizers. We want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel. In this sense, we

ought to let others be constantly evangelizing us. But this does not mean that we should postpone the evangelizing mission; rather, each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are. All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfections offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and gives meaning to our lives (*Evangelii gaudium*, 121).

- It is also urgent to continue to bear witness to the journey of encounter between the different Christian confessions. We cannot forget Christ's desire "that they may all be one" (cf. Jn 17:21). Hearing his call, we recognize with sorrow that the process of globalization still lacks the prophetic and spiritual contribution of unity among Christians. This notwithstanding, "even as we make this journey towards full communion, we already have the duty to offer common witness to the love of God for all people by working together in the service of humanity" (*Fratelli tutti*, 280).