



YEAR OF FAITH 2012  
2013

LIVING  
OUR  
*Relationship*  
WITH  
JESUS CHRIST



"Christian Education has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced to the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth"

(Gravissimum Educationis, 2)

09/2013

# Vatican II | *What Difference Does it Make?*

## GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS *Decree on Christian Education*

DOCUMENT:

The Council in presenting this Decree noted how important and influential education is in the life of a person. Circumstances then and in our time make it urgent to educate young people and continue the education of adults. Persons, more aware of their dignity, want an active part in social, economic and political life, and see an opportunity offered by technology, science and new means of communication for mutual, cultural and spiritual fulfillment.

*Gravissimum Educationis* sets forth two basic principles: 1) True education has as its goal the formation of the whole person for his ultimate end to be with God through doing good as a member of society and 2) Christian education strives to develop baptized persons in the knowledge and mystery of the gift of Faith to lead them to worship God the Father in spirit and truth.

With these two basic principles, the Decree proceeds to define the roles of parents, the Church and State. Regarding the Church, it states: "To fulfill the Church's divine mandate to proclaim salvation and to restore all things in Christ, the Church has a role in the progress and development of education. A true education aims at the formation of human persons in the pursuit of the ultimate end and the good of societies of which we are members and in whose obligations as adults we all share."

The Council declared that children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God. Consequently it earnestly entreated all those in authority to see to it that youth are never deprived of this sacred right. The Church is to give its attention with generosity to the entire field

of education, having especially in mind the need of extending the benefit of a suitable education and training to everyone in all parts of the world.

Since all Christians have become by Baptism a new creature so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. They are to strive for the growth of the Mystical Body of Christ and bear witness to the hope that is in them. In addition, they are to help in the Christian formation of the world through contributing to the good of the whole society.

Parents are, of course, the primary and principal educators of their children. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and others. Hence, the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. Parents must recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's people. Parents who embrace this vision are helping their children, and are contributing to the well being of society.

Since Vatican II, both the Congregation for Catholic Education and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have issued documents that get to the heart of Catholic education such as *To Teach as Jesus Did* (1972) and *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) to name two. In addition, increased attention to Catechesis has focused on all Religious Education in both Catholic Schools and Parish Schools of Religion. We thank the Fathers of the Council for their foresight in beginning the unending quest for the deepening of our Faith through proper Catechesis and continuing education in the Faith.

Margaret Lyons

### Reflection Questions

1. Does my education reflect a formation for the ultimate end to be with God?
2. How does Christian education promote formation of the whole person?
3. How does the Church support parents in raising a family schooled in virtue?
4. How does Christian education contribute to society's good?

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