

## EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS ON THE PERIPHERIES

Cristo Rey School. CARORA (Venezuela)



One of the fundamental reasons why St. Joseph Calasanz created the Pious Schools was, to contribute to the reform of society, a principle that sinks its roots in the way Jesus went through the world doing good, healing the sick, lepers, crippled, returning to them health and dignity, and that Calasanz learned from the Master's school.

In the U.E. Colegio Cristo Rey – Pious Schools of Carora, Venezuela, through some educational practices which we had been developing, we were taking small steps in order to respond to the evangelical ideal mentioned above, while the Departments of Pedagogy and Pastoral, from the stage of Preschool Education, from the age of 3, to the Middle school,

with high school students, aged between 12 and 16, and with the staff of the institution, assigned to these groups, each year, a social action work aimed at children of educational institutions located in depressed and/or special education sectors, orphanages, nursing homes, homeless dining room, prison or other agencies for the care of vulnerable populations.

It should be noted that students of the last high school year, must fulfill a social work of 100 hours distributed throughout the school year, responding to the guidelines of the Organic Education Law (LOE) in article 13, a requirement that has been used to offer their support, according to their talents (athletes, artists, musicians, others) in the various programs that we promote in our presence, on some of the mission platforms, such as the Itaka-Escolapios Foundation and the Calasanz Cultural Center. In the Calasanz Movement, students who have been making active life in the Calasanz Movement offer their work as monitors.

Even though we start by offering these spaces, we are aware that they have been insufficient, and in most cases, have not generated solid responsibilities. That is why, since 2018, together with Fr. Javier Alonso, in the review, evaluation, redesign of our Educational Project, and about the preparation of his book, *A SCHOOL GOING FORTH. Educational meetings on the peripheries*, we agreed that the community actions that we had been carrying out had to go beyond an anecdotal event, or the fulfillment of a legal requirement, to become sustained and consistent actions over time, which gradually allowed our students a commitment as volunteers while in school or graduating from it.

This led us to incorporate, in the profile of our students, virtues such as solidarity, compassion, responsibility, the same ones that allow children and young people to look, reflect on the reality of the poorest and most fragile, and that, moreover, lead them to leave themselves to meet "the wounded at the edge of the road", commit to being agents of change and can link themselves to associations of solidarity, as volunteers in the various mission platforms and social action projects that we promote in the presence, or engage, as collaborators, in transformative action in their own communities or in the Church.

Likewise, this educational proposal has represented, for us, an opportunity to articulate the different areas of the curriculum, taking advantage that before, during and at the end of the process, teachers integrate their subjects seeking to bring meaning and integrality between the contents they offer and the values that they want to develop. We also aim to make it one of the means to build a school in pastoral key and to create vocational

culture, by virtue of creating an environment conducive to the child, the young person, discovering, beyond their own realities, the "others" to which society has made invisible, engage in the construction of a more fraternal world. Fr. Javier tells us about it, it is about "identifying those who have been discarded by the injustice and sin of the world, teaching students to look at the reality of the excluded with eyes of mercy, proffering in experience to identify the causes of exclusion and propose responsible actions".

To do this, the plan proposes a few steps that can be expanded in the *book A School going forth. Educational meetings in the peripheries*, of Fr. Javier Alonso, however, here in a subdued way of what each one is about.

**Evoke:** In the classroom there are realities of social exclusion through texts, frames, videos, others.

**Explore:** Sand invite students to leave the classroom to have a first ENCOUNTER with the reality of the excluded. **Dialogue:** **Once** they have held the first meeting, in the classroom, they discuss the experience held in it: description and first impressions.

**Recognize:** It is about leaving school again to get personal stories of the excluded who have already visited the first time through a more constant MEETING of service.

**Dig deeper.** Back in the classroom, they discuss the causes of social exclusion from a faith glance and seek viable solutions to change this reality...

**Share.** In the classroom, on social networks or other media, they share the learnings they have acquired and what has aroused in them the entire course of the experience.



It is worth noting that for the application of this model, an induction process is required with the entire educational community. In our school, before we started the "Educational Meetings on the Peripheries", we had a training process aimed at all teaching staff, students and their families, to appropriate and involve them all in that plan. Next, the execution of this one began with the high school students, year 2018, the elementary children were incorporated for the 2019 – 2020 academic year, and for this new year, 2020 – 2021, we are preparing to take it with all levels of education, including the children of the initial education stage so that all school will be aimed at being a *missionary school*,

*school going forth.*

It is important to note that the development of this educational proposal takes time, and for this reason, we place it in the 2nd. Quarter. Each group is given, according to its level, a theme, among which we can mention, and have been executed with high school students; street children, homeless, cognitively impaired, abused women, drug addicts and chronically ill people, and with elementary school students, work has been done with older adults (grandparents), visually impaired people, motor skills, cognitive and special education children. As we are in the third year of having started, we rotate the themes between the courses and thus give them the opportunity to explore various realities. For now, we are in the process of sowing, we hope to continue working enthusiastically, the growth of this seed, we leave it to God.

To go out on the path of those in need is to bet on a new human being, clothed in the feelings of Christ, for this reason we invite other schools to encourage the realization of such encounters, not as isolated facts, but as a key to concretize the profile of the school student, because it responds to the same call that Pope Francis makes

to all the baptized , a "Church on the way out fully dedicated to the mission, so that the Gospel of the Kingdom may reach the peripheries of humanity" and because today the educational model devised by our saint, who well left it embodied in his work and explicit in his letters, remains in force. "The reform of Christian society lies in the diligent practice of such a mission, for if from childhood the child is diligently imbued with piety and letters, the happy course of his life must be foreseen with foundation" (CC2).

Next, I share the testimony of Prof. Jean Carlo Rojas, who through a series of questions tells us about the experience lived with the students of 2nd Year B in his project "TO THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN OF THE STREET", we will also know the testimony of the student of 6th. Grade B, Sahily Lameda, who narrates the experience and learnings of his Project "Meeting PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL OR COGNITIVE DISABILITY".

Carmen Crespo.

