

Building the education village

International Catholic Education Congress

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The city of Marseille (France) hosted some 300 representatives and leaders of Catholic schools from all over the world associated with OIEC from 1 to 3 December to reflect together on the dynamics of the Global Education Pact. Carles Gil Saguer and Javier Alonso from the Pious Schools took part. We had the gift of meeting with a group of religious and lay people from the Calasancian Sisters and with our friends from the Marianist family, with Catholic Schools, with the Secretariat of the Christian School (Catalonia), with whom we always connect well.

The Congress began with a Eucharist in the cathedral presided over by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Marseilles, Jean Marc Aveline. It was a celebration with a very careful liturgy and a message of hope at the beginning of Advent.

1 December



Cardinal Cristóbal Romero López, Archbishop of Rabat (Morocco) read a message from Pope Francis written to frame this world event. Education is for the Christian "an inescapable duty", "a pressing challenge", "a way of participating in the prophetic role that Jesus left to his Church", the Holy Father began by defining it. "Therefore, when we approach education, we cannot do so thinking of something merely human, focusing the question on programmes, training, resources, areas of reception, because the Christian vocation asks us to give a welcoming voice", because the Christian vocation asks us to give voice to a Word that is not ours, that surpasses us, that transcends us", explained Francis, detailing his vision of education.

Thus, for the Holy Father, "logically", the teaching of the Catholic school is not limited to confessional matters and its contents are open to all branches of knowledge and to anyone who seeks this instruction. "But just as we say that the activity of the school cannot be reduced to the teaching of subjects, but to the formation of persons in their integrity, so, when speaking of the Catholic school, that prophetic component is equally indispensable, which not only gives man the aptitude to acquire knowledge, but also to know himself and to recognise himself as a being capable of loving and being loved", the Bishop of Rome continued in his letter.

After coffee, the sympathetic Cardinal of Marseille captivated us with a lecture entitled "Freedom of belief and the art of living together: educational challenges in the Mediterranean". Anthony Gittins of the University of Chicago, who spoke to us about the Catholic school as a sacrament of hope. Fr. Calvin Klein reviewed the magisterium of the Pope on the Educational Pact. In the afternoon, two interesting round tables "Educating in universal fraternity in a multi-religious educational context" and "Building universal fraternity together and through education". And to end the day, Catholic schools will present their projects in line with the Global Education Pact, including a dance performed by their pupils.

2 December



Almost the entire day was devoted to the development of the GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL PACT (PEG). It began with a discussion with two members of the international team responsible for promoting the GEP: Brother Juan Antonio Ojeda and María Cinque. Both reminded us of the meaning and dynamics of this project promoted by Pope Francis.

The Archbishop of Rabat spoke to us about how Catholic schools in Morocco carry out their evangelising mission in a predominantly Muslim context. This was followed by a presentation of the World Report on Catholic Education, with very interesting data that would merit a whole separate article, and of GRACE, an initiative to promote the PEG from the university. The afternoon was devoted entirely to sharing experiences on how the PEG is being carried out by continents.

And as a special treat, we had the opportunity to watch the premiere of a superb documentary on POPE FRANCISCO introduced to us by Evgeny Afineevsky, an Oscar-nominated American-Israeli director. Simply stunning.

And we continue to make friends... and build links with other congregations. Getting to know interesting proposals and ideas that we can apply in our schools... All in all, very inspiring.

3 December



The third day began with a discussion with director Evgeny Afineevsky about the documentary film about Pope Francis that we saw the previous day. The Israeli director captured very well the message of peace and reconciliation that the Pope wishes to convey in his ten years of pontificate. It is striking that there is still cinema committed to the good of humanity that flees from the logic of commerce and fame.

The Haitian nun Marta Seide gave a lecture connecting the dynamics of the PEG with the processes of educational innovation needed in schools. Monsignor Alfonso Cortés presented an experience of formation for parents and as a finishing touch, the French Muslim philosopher Abdennor Bider gave us a sublime conference entitled "Repairing the torn fabric of the world together". In order to rebuild the fabric of

civilisation, it is necessary to reweave links with oneself, with others, with nature and with God from the interiority of the person.

And in the afternoon, the closing ceremony with the intervention of Monsignor Paul Tigue, Secretary of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, and a Eucharist of thanksgiving in the beautiful Gothic church of St. Victor.

And in the evening, the dinner to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the OIEC with the animation of a group of young people from the Catholic schools in the north of Marseille.



The Pious Schools are the first religious Institute of the Church dedicated to education, after which many others followed throughout the world. Although we are a small part of the Catholic school, we must be present in national and international organisations where projects and visions on education are shared. We have a great pedagogical tradition to contribute, but also much to learn from other Institutions passionate about education. More than ever, these events are a call to walk together to be a body of hope to change the world.

If you wish to see the presentations, they are uploaded on the OIEC youtube channel.

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLT_kOynLxQM8OU7F9WbkyMeazYPigLedr

