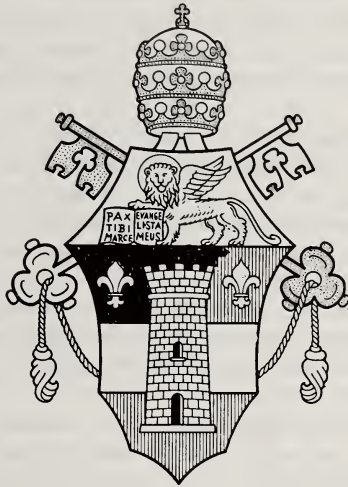


John XXIII, Pope, 1958-1963
The Holy Father speaks to
teachers c.2. MS 2826

The Holy Father Speaks to Teachers



NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington 5, D. C.

ON THE DUTIES OF TEACHERS

Translation of an address delivered by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII on September 5, 1959 to members of the Italian Association of Catholic Teachers.

A widespread and paternal greeting springs from Our heart in welcoming you to Castelgandolfo, beloved sons and daughters of the Italian Association of Catholic Teachers who have come to Rome from all regions of Italy to take part in your sixth national congress.

We welcome you and are happy to express Our warm satisfaction on this occasion, particularly during these September days that already herald for you the start of a new year of hard work and rewards in the exercise of the educational mission that you chose as a vocation and which you perform in an exemplary manner for the good of the Church and of civil society.

By following the provident development of your meritorious association, We know the wealth of spirit and the dignity of cultural and pedagogical training you have brought to it, making possible its spread throughout Italy inside of a few years, and thus achieving its aim of training, aiding and enlightening an ever wider legion of members.

You are particularly pleasing to Us because of your title of Catholic teachers, which gives you high honor and generous inspiration: two words that clearly express your convictions, your aims and your ideals.

You are pleasing to Us above all because you are fulfilling a lofty and noble mission that makes of you priceless instruments in the intellectual, civic, moral and religious education of those who are the hope of the Church and of the fatherland; and because you often carry out such a function in silence, in sacrifice, in hardworking simplicity that does not seek recognition, but is satisfied solely by the good testimony of one's own conscience.

At this moment Our mind is filled with the pleasant picture of teachers (both men and women) who have spent their entire life for the school and whom both We and you have known: serene and smiling, modest, but firm, bending with infinite patience over the desks of children who at times were restless but eager

to learn—to know nature, God's work and its beauty, to drink deeply of the fountain of truth and wisdom.

Beloved sons and daughters! We wish on this occasion to leave with you some thoughts of encouragement and support for you in your daily toils, so that you may continue with renewed energy and firm and constant purpose on the path which you have chosen.

We recommend to you "in visceribus Jesu Christi" (*Phil.* 1, 8) (in the heart of Jesus Christ), always to hold your mission in profound esteem, so that you may accomplish with holy fervor that which is required of your good will.

1) Above all, you train the minds of your young pupils, whose process of development is stimulated and accelerated by modern pedagogical methods, as well as by the widespread effectiveness of the press and of audio-visual techniques.

Meanwhile, continued effort is required on your part to add more and more to your specific training for the work you do, which requires, and will require even more so in the future, mastery of a secure and profound doctrine.

This particular need has already been called to your attention by the subject of the congress: "Elementary Education at the School Level."

We know—and We encourage all plans and efforts made in this field—that there is being studied the delicate and important problem of adding to elementary education a formative training adapted to the ability and needs of youths from 10 to 14 years, a training that will give them a more mature consciousness of their own duty, make possible the acquisition of knowledge necessary to present-day work and prepare them to attend professional institutes or to engage in their future activity—without precluding access to higher studies.

Such a prospective plan opens new horizons for your beneficent educational influence, which requires of you a complete and satisfactory technical preparation. For this reason We paternally exhort you continuously to elevate and perfect yourselves in culture, so that your sphere of action may extend in depth to such new and difficult fields, respected because of your seriousness and possession of the necessary requisites.

2) Your mission, however, is something that is even higher: you form and mold the souls of your students. The figure of the teacher—a memory that everyone locks away in his heart as one of the dearest memories of childhood—rests entirely in the

lofty function which makes him an educator of souls by words, example and the patient work he performs with difficulty and sacrifices.

St. John Chrysostom outlines such an incomparable mission with the profound words so well known to you:

“What is there greater than to direct the soul and mold the habits of adolescents? I deem, without a doubt, more excellent than painters, than all sculptors and artists, he who understands well the art of shaping the soul of the youth” (Hom. 59 to 60 on chap. 18, *St. Matt.*, Migne 58, 584).

This ability does not come from book learning or practice, but from the grace of God, from prayer and from a long apprenticeship of profound Christian living, beginning with the fruitful years of study and school.

The greatness of this educational mission is judged also by the responsibility which it entails: As we pointed out at the start, the destinies of human society are entrusted to the work of teachers because they train the men of tomorrow, instilling in their hearts—still tender and pliable—teachings and impressions that will remain dominant throughout life.

Teachers, in addition, establish fruitful contacts with the families of students; these contacts can go further than a simple scholastic relationship. They can become a beneficent influence through convinced Christian testimony.

Meanwhile, it is necessary that your efforts strengthen more and more your own Faith, in order to insure firm mastery of Catholic doctrine; that your efforts may serve to make clear your duty, professionally as well, to attain a strong Christian personality; furthermore, that these efforts may remain always an example in the conscientious fulfillment of duty and be generous in the social apostolate and in relation to civic matters.

3) We wish to convey to you a final thought that may sustain you in the accomplishment of the duties mentioned. It is this: In educating the minds and molding the souls of your students. You are preparing for yourselves in heaven one of the brightest crowns. Unfortunately, sometimes projects and claims, methods and problems are given first place. Although these may be useful and urgent they must not make you lose sight of the goal toward which everything must be directed if it is to have meaning.

All things, as able teachers of all times teach, must be viewed “sub specie aeternitatis,” in their eternal and unchangeable value, of which they shall never be divested. This is why

We encourage you to discharge your duty with the most staunch faith, the most steadfast hope and the most fervent charity: in the expectation of heaven, to which your souls aspire with yearning and ardor.

May there always shine before you the Biblical words: "But they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity" (*Dan.* 12, 3).

May this be your secret longing, the desire that shall find fulfillment in the blessed possession of God.

And may it give you always strength and renewed courage when life's difficulties, the harshness of duties, burdens, misunderstandings or crises disturb your serenity. May the thought of the glory that God prepares in heaven for his good and faithful servants always give you strength and renewed courage.

These are the wishes that, at this eve of the National Eucharistic Congress, We entrust in your behalf with the Divine Saviour, with the prayer that His grace and virtue may always accompany you in the fulfillment of your delicate and most noble work.

So that your joy may be greater in this amiable meeting of children with their mutual father, We impart from Our heart to you, your dear ones, your students—together with the well deserving central president—and to leaders and assistants of the Italian Association of Catholic Teachers, Our propitiatory apostolic blessing.

Joannes XXIII

J.P.

ON THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENCYCLICAL DIVINI ILLIUS MAGISTRI

Translation of a message sent by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII to the International Office of Catholic Education in Utrecht, The Netherlands, December 31, 1959.

To Our venerable brothers and dear children meeting at Utrecht to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the encyclical *Divini illius Magistri*:

We are present in spirit among you and congratulate you wholeheartedly for having wished to solemnize the anniversary of one of the most memorable documents of the pontificate of Our great predecessor Pius XI, that "charter of the Christian education of youth" that is the encyclical *Dvini illius Magistri*.

This encyclical, a truly admirable monument of the Church's magisterium, well merits this solemn commemoration. With what firmness of principle and lucidity of exposition did the great Pontiff assign therein the respective roles of the family, the Church and the state in the great task of education! What fine psychology in analyzing the subject of education, the child, and what solidity of argumentation in showing how justified is the Church's demand for an educational "milieu" in harmony with the faith of her children!

We say it without hesitation: This important document has lost none of its truth. Today, as yesterday, the Church loudly affirms that her rights and those of the family are prior to those of the state; today, as yesterday, she affirms her own right to have schools where teachers with solid convictions can inculcate a Christian conception of life, where all the teaching can be given in the light of the Faith.

One may well believe that the clear directives of Pius XI in this encyclical are related to the growing interest shown by Christian parents during these last decades in the problems of teaching and of education. We have seen multiplied in a striking way around the schools the "parents associations" that have shown themselves entirely suitable and useful of assuring the always-desirable collaboration between families and the teachers to whom these families entrust their children.

In addition we have seen developing or coming into being in many countries the national services of Catholic education,

responsible for insuring a coordination of effort among Catholic schools and for representing them with the civil authorities. In their turn these national services agreed to form international bodies, with capabilities of action and of representation corresponding to their appropriate role in the present world.

It was in this way, in fact, that the International Office of Catholic Education, which has already acquired so many merits and whose initiative resulted in your meeting today, came into existence. How could one fail to rejoice at so much good and fruitful work in the service of the Church in a domain so precious in her eyes as the education of her children?

We wish wholeheartedly for these efforts to be pursued and intensified. In an epoch in which national and international authorities, justly solicitous for the intellectual and moral elevation of humanity, are organizing on a vast scale the diffusion of education, of science and of culture, the active presence of sons of the Church is more than ever necessary to expound, represent and to defend—when necessary—the Church's point of view.

In the organization of Christian teaching, moreover, they will know how to adapt to various situations the ever-new principles of the encyclical. Many things have in fact changed or evolved during 30 years. We are thinking here of the notable progress of religious teaching, of the recent useful acquisitions of pedagogy, of the efforts made in praiseworthy fashion to complete instruction properly so-called with an education where the child finds in a Christian atmosphere a blossoming of his personality, where little by little he masters his heart and his sensitivity, strengthens his will, and learns to live as a true son of the Church.

But let Us, above all, tell you of Our concern with respect to the present development of the technical world and the consequences of this for teaching. The Christian Faith surely has nothing to fear from science, or from the techniques derived from it; on the contrary, it teaches us that scientific advances are a glorification of the creative goodness of God, Who said: "Fill the earth, and subdue it" (*Gen. 1, 28*).

But it teaches us also that these are mere means put at the disposition of man, who can use them for better or—alas!—for worse. That is why it seems to Us indispensable that staunch Catholics should be present today in great number in this domain of human activity that is so advanced, so that they may orient

it in the direction willed by the Creator; that is why it is advantageous also for many children to obtain in Catholic technical schools of quality a specialized training and a truly Christian education that will permit them to be tomorrow's professional and moral elite, of which the world and the Church stand so much in need.

We reveal to you these expressions of Our pastoral solicitude in order to bear testimony of Our esteem for your work, which is in conformity with the encyclical *Divini illius Magistri*, according to the developments that it implies in present society. Their wishes will also encourage you to strive, as you have done in the past, to meet the demands and desires of the Church in matters of education. With this assurance, We invoke on each of you, venerable brothers and dear sons, a generous flow of grace, in pledge of which We wholeheartedly impart to you Our affectionate apostolic benediction.

Joannes XXII

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