

The Apostolate of Education

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Throughout the world today, whether in the advanced or in the evolving nations, there is clear recognition of the importance of education for the formation of society and particularly for the initiating of youth into a human way of life and fellowship. Nothing is more esteemed by political leaders than this education of the citizenry, for without it no nation or state can develop or progress and meet the national and international responsibilities imposed by the needs of this age.

2. The Church has, therefore, reflected upon “the paramount importance of education in the life of man, and its ever-mounting influence on the social progress of this era”¹ and once again affirmed its own role in the development and extension of education. To fulfill this function the Church wishes to employ all appropriate means. Yet it recognizes that schools are educational agencies of “special importance,”² for in these institutions Christian teachers are to promote the renewal of the Church and maintain and intensify her beneficent and salutary presence in the contemporary and, particularly, the intellectual world.³

3. In our day we are witnessing everywhere the rapid emergence of new social forms and the society of the future. When new ideas are so widely sown it is not hard to discern the birth of new patterns of thought and action in the modern world. The promoters of these new ideas, especially when they work out of centers of higher culture and research, are exercising a mounting influence upon the whole of social culture through highly effective modern means of popularization. But since this influence inclines ever more toward an atheistic and agnostic ideology and makes itself felt particularly in educational centers, the presence of Christians in those centers is of the highest moment if the Church is indeed to make an opportune contribution to the society of the future by forming and educating its mind to reverence for God and in the fullness of Christ.

4. For many centuries the Society of Jesus, in accordance with its Institute, has diligently exercised its teaching function almost uninterruptedly throughout the world. Now, impelled and inspired by the Second Vatican Council, the Society, through its 31st General Congregation, wishes to confirm the high regard it has for this apostolate of education and earnestly to exhort its members that they maintain unflaggingly their esteem for this significant apostolate.

There are some members of the Society, however, who think that our educational institutions in certain parts of the world have become practically useless and should therefore be given up. There are others who recognize the continued effectiveness of these institutions but believe that there are other ministries in which we would perhaps be even more effective. Hence they conclude that it is necessary, or at least appropriate, to leave the work of formal education to laymen or to religious whose institutes dedicate them exclusively to this apostolate. This Congregation judges that there is no uniform solution for this very real and pressing problem. The solution it requires will necessarily vary according to differences of circumstances. Therefore, it must be determined by superiors, with the aid of their brethren and according to the norms for the choice of ministries as applied to the needs of each province or region.

The intention of this present decree, however, is, in the first place, that the Society may think with the Church concerning the paramount importance and effectiveness of the educational apostolate, particularly in our times. Secondly, it is intended that our schools be outstanding not so much for number and size as for teaching, for the quality of the instruction, and the service rendered to the people of God. Thirdly, we should be receptive toward new forms of this apostolate, particularly adapted to the present age, and we should

energetically investigate or fashion these new forms either in our own schools or elsewhere. Finally, for those laymen who generously spend themselves with us in this apostolate, the way should be opened to a wider collaboration with us, whether this be in teaching, administration, or on the board of directors itself.

5. It is evident that we can exercise the apostolate of education in various ways either in our own institutions or by collaborating with others. There is an extensive variety today whether one is speaking of colleges and universities, or vocational schools, or the so-called normal schools for the training of teachers. Which forms of the apostolate of education the Society should take up is a matter for superiors to decide according to the norms for the selection of ministries. But in making this selection, we should consider the new means of social communication, particularly radio and television. For these are highly effective instruments for new kinds of educational organization and pedagogy since they extend to the widest possible audience and reach those who would otherwise be deprived of schooling. Besides, they are very much in line with the present day "culture of the image."

The Society should have its own educational institutions where resources and circumstances permit and a greater service of God and the Church can be thereby expected. For these schools constitute at least one effective instrument for the promotion of our educational purpose, i.e., the synthesizing of faith and culture. Through these schools a firmer and more lasting social presence in the community is achieved, both because they are a corporate effort and because through the students families are influenced. Thus the school becomes an apostolic center within the community.

If, indeed, there is question of closing schools or of handing them over to others, superiors are to work out the best way of doing this in consultation with the local Ordinary and with the approbation of Father General.

II. DECREE

6. Let Jesuits have a high regard for the apostolate of education as one of the primary ministries of the Society, commended in a special way by the Church in our time. For the transmission of human culture and its integration in Christ significantly contribute to realization of the goal set by our Lord "that God may be all in all things."⁴

7. This apostolate aims to provide a service of love for mankind redeemed by Christ. On the one hand, it aims so to educate believers as to make them not only cultured but, in both private and public lives, men who are authentically Christian and able and willing to work for the modern apostolate.

On the other hand, it aims to provide non-Christians with a humanistic formation directed towards the welfare of their own nation and, at the same time, to conduct them by degrees to the knowledge and love of God or at least to the acceptance of moral, and even religious values.⁵

8. Let the provincials see to it that the apostolate of education, along with other ministries, be really and continually adapted to the circumstances of men, time, and place, making use in this of the advice both of experts and of the committee on the choice of ministries. Let the provincials also see to it that really competent men are prepared in education.

9. In collaboration with the bishops, other religious, and their fellow citizens, let Jesuits be alert to correlate the Society's activity with the complex of pastoral and educational work in the whole region or nation. Since, moreover, dialogue in this pluralistic world is both possible and desirable, let them also willingly cooperate with other organizations, even if these do not depend either on the Church or the Society. Let Jesuits therefore keep in mind the special importance of collaborating with those international organizations which promote education, especially in the less developed countries.

10. a) Let students be selected, as far as possible, of whom we can expect a greater progress and a greater influence on society, no matter to what social class they belong.

b) In order that this criterion of selection may be equitably applied, Jesuits should firmly advance the claims of distributive justice, so that public aid will provide parents with the real liberty of choosing schools for their children according to their conscience.⁶

c) However, until such rights have been vindicated, the Society, in accordance with its *Constitutions*⁷ and traditional practice, must make it easy for talented young people, particularly in the emerging nations, to attend our schools. Therefore, let all Jesuits try to obtain public or private endowments, with the help of our alumni, or of those who are bound to the Society through special friendship or apostolic zeal.⁸

11. Our educational institutions should be established only when and where they show promise of contributing significantly to the welfare of the Church, and can be furnished besides with an adequate supply of competent Jesuits without harm to the training or studies of our own members.⁹ Let superiors inquire whether it is more suitable to open or to retain schools of our own or whether it would be better in some circumstances to teach in public schools, or in schools directed by others.

12. a) The first care of Jesuits should be that Christian students acquire that knowledge and character which are worthy of Christians, along with the letters and sciences. To this end, it will help very much if, in addition to the suitable amount of time given to the teaching of Christian doctrine and religion according to modern methods, Jesuits also offer to the students a good example of hard work and dedication as well as of religious life.¹⁰

b) We should try in a special way to imbue our students with the true charity of Christ, according to the social doctrine of the Church. Let them learn to honor and be grateful to laboring men; let them learn to hunger and thirst for that justice which aims to provide all men with an adequate recompense for new work, that the distribution of wealth be more equitable, that the sharing of spiritual goods be fuller and more universal.¹¹

c) Let youth be progressively formed to liturgical and personal prayer. As they come to be more mature, exercises of piety should be proposed to them rather than imposed.

d) Selected spiritual and apostolic activities which will really be an efficacious means of character formation, for example the sodalities, should be properly established and directed and esteemed by us all. For they serve to introduce and educate our students in apostolic activities step by step.

e) Special importance should be attributed to the spiritual direction of students. For this is an effective way of nourishing a person's sense of responsibility both for the ordering of his spiritual life and for the choosing of an adult vocation in accordance with the divine will. In addition, every effort should be made for a fresh increase of priestly and religious vocations so as to help the Church in its present needs.

f) Regarding non-Christian students, care must be taken throughout the whole course of studies and especially in ethics courses that men be formed who are endowed with a sound moral judgment and solid virtues. Therefore in their training, the first rank of importance must be given to the formation of a true and right moral conscience, and at the same time of a firm will to act according to it. For in this way they will be best prepared to have a saving effect on family life and society, and in addition to serve their country and to obtain the reward of eternal life.

13. a) Let Jesuits remember that the task of teaching is not restricted to some hours nor only to some persons.¹² Let all give a witness of religious and apostolic life; let all be convinced that the common task is more important than individual success; and let them try continually to renew themselves in spirit and understanding. To this end, superiors should favor research, experiments, the discovery of new methods of teaching, and see to it that the

members have libraries, audio-visual aids, conferences by experts, possibilities of attending meetings, and other helps.

b) Scholastics and younger brothers who are sent to the colleges should be watched over with special care by superiors and spiritual fathers.¹³ They should remember that regency is established for their own growth, and so that their virtue may develop, their character be trained, their gifts manifested, and they themselves may make progress in studies. But the real assistance they provide for the work of education should also be considered, and so they should share in the common responsibility for and the discussion of plans concerning the school, according to its statutes.

14. For its part, the Society should help those many children of the Church who are being educated in non-Catholic schools. Superiors should be mindful of the Church's solicitude in this matter. In their concern for the spiritual formation of all youth, superiors should attentively and willingly listen to bishops who ask for the collaboration of the Society in this ministry, especially in directing Catholic centers for students, in the office of chaplains, and also in teaching in non-Catholic schools.¹⁴

15. a) Young people who travel abroad for their education, as often happens nowadays, should be attentively helped. This is especially important in the case of those, whether Catholic or not, who are outstanding and can be expected to become leaders when they return to their own country.¹⁵

b) We should maintain a relationship with our former students, the products of our whole educational effort, so that they may take their place in society in a Christian and apostolic way and help one another in their respective tasks. The bond which they have with the Society ought to become closer as time goes on so that their influence assists its work.¹⁶

16. Elementary schools may be founded and directed where it is necessary. For they are very important and not contrary to our Institute. Nonetheless they should not be accepted without a real and great need, lest on account of the lack of men a greater good would be hindered. Where they are accepted, so far as possible our priests should have only the teaching of religion.¹⁷

17. It is during the period of secondary education that many young people (twelve to eighteen years old) either synthesize religion and culture in themselves or fail to do so and are strongly oriented towards good or away from it. Hence, having weighed the objections often made nowadays against secondary schools by those who would rather restrict themselves to pastoral ministries, the Society again asserts that the teaching of youth according to the principles of our Institute, even in the so-called profane disciplines, is entirely conformed to our vocation and to our sacerdotal character. Indeed, it is the ministry to which the Society owes most of its growth.¹⁸

18. Secondary schools, be they old ones retained or new ones founded, should improve continually. They should be educationally effective as well as centers of culture and faith, for lay cooperators and the families of students and alumni. Thereby they will help the whole community of the region. Let Jesuits also foster to a closer cooperation with the parents of students, upon whom the primary responsibility of education rests.¹⁹

19. a) Each province should have its own *ordinationes* for secondary schools, in harmony with its own needs.²⁰

b) As far as subject matter is concerned, the education of our students should be in conformity with the genuine cultural tradition of each nation or region, in so-called classical literature, or modern literature, or in science.

c) Moreover, other schools, such as technical and agricultural schools may well be opened where need or great utility suggest it.²¹

20. *a)* Subjects should be so taught that the mind of the young is not overwhelmed with a multiplicity of details, and that all their powers may be suitably developed and they may be prepared for higher studies. In addition, our students should be helped so that they can make progress by themselves, and so that there may grow in them firmness of mind, uprightness of judgment and sensibility, aesthetic sense, a capacity to express themselves, orally and in writing, a sense of community and of civil and social duty, and depth of understanding.²²

b) Regarding the method of teaching, let there be kept in all fields, as far as is possible, the proper method of the Society which is commended in the *Ratio Studiorum*. Therefore let all be familiar with those principles of sound pedagogy which are set down by our holy founder in the *Constitutions*, Part IV, developed in the *Ratio Studiorum*, and clearly explained by many writers of the Society.²³

21. After they have consulted Father General, provincials should decide in light of the circumstances of persons and place, whether daily Mass should be obligatory in our residential secondary schools.²⁴

22. So-called apostolic schools can be kept and, established where, all things considered, they seem to be for the greater glory of God. What is said primarily concerning secondary schools is to be applied also to them.²⁵

23. Coeducation in secondary schools is not to be allowed except with the approval of Father General.²⁶

24. *a)* On account of the ever-growing importance of universities and institutions of higher learning for the formation of the whole human community, we must see to it that the Society and its priests are present to this work. Let there be, therefore, an ever greater number of professors prepared for such institutions, whether directed by the Society or by others. These professors should be able not only to teach advanced courses, but also to contribute to scholarly progress by their own research and that of their talented students whom they have trained.²⁷

b) Among the faculties belonging to our institutions of higher education, theology and philosophy should especially have their proper place to whatever extent they contribute, in various places, to the greater service of God.²⁸

c) The prohibition in the *Constitutions*, according to which that part of canon law which serves for contesting suits is not to be touched by Jesuits, is to be thus understood: “unless the general judges that something else is good.”²⁹

25. The education of priests, as a work of the highest value, is to be considered one of the chief ministries of the Society. Therefore, the seminarians who attend our universities are to be watched over with special attention, and directors and teachers chosen from among our best men are to be assigned to those clerical seminaries whose direction is accepted by the Society.³⁰ But if there is question of diocesan seminaries, a definite contract shall be made with the bishop and approved by the Holy See.³¹

26. Not only youth but adults are to be educated, both for the advancement of their professional lives and for the efforts which make their conjugal, family, and social life more human and Christian, and develop a better understanding of the faith.³²

27. *a)* According to the mind of the Second Vatican Council, a close collaboration with the laity is recommended. On the one hand we can give them help in their formation by schools, conferences, spiritual exercises and other suitable works, and by our friendly dealing with them and the testimony of our life. On the other hand, let Jesuits consider the importance for the Society itself of such collaboration with lay people, who will always be the natural interpreters for us of the modern world, and so will always give us effective help in this apostolate. Therefore, we should consider handing over to them the roles they are prepared to

assume in the work of education, whether these be in teaching, in academic and business administration, or even on the board of directors.³³

b) It will also be advantageous to consider whether it would not be helpful to establish in some of our institutions of higher education a board of trustees which is composed partly of Jesuits and partly of lay people; the responsibility both of ownership and of direction shall pertain to this board.

28. Men of our time are very interested in new and more adequate intercommunication, by which international union and progress are fostered. Therefore Jesuits should be concerned to promote among their students and alumni and other members of the social community those efforts and means which can lead to a greater and more efficacious collaboration among nations.

29. Prefects or directors of education should be named who will help the provincials in directing the whole effort of education; they can be so united that the whole Society can enjoy the benefits of the studies and the experiments which are being carried on in various regions of the world.

30. In each province or region there should be a permanent committee of experts who will help superiors in this apostolate, drawing up and continually adapting regulations concerning our schools, in harmony with each one's needs.³⁴

31. To help Father General in fostering the whole work of education, a secretariat of education should be established. Its task will be to collect and distribute information about the apostolate of education carried on by Jesuits and also to promote alumni associations and periodic conventions.

32. Decree 141 of the *Collection of Decrees* is abrogated.

¹ GE introduction.

² GE 5.

³ GE conclusion.

⁴ GE introduction: *CollDecr* 131 [141].

⁵ *CollDecr* 136 §1. [141].

⁶ Cf. GE 6.

⁷ *Cons* IV. 15. 4 [478].

⁸ *CollDecr* [143].

⁹ *CollDecr* 133.

¹⁰ *CollDecr* 136 § 1.

¹¹ Cf. Fr. Janssens. *ActRSJ* 11 (1949) 720-21;

John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, *passim*;

GS 29.

¹² *CollDecr* 142.

¹³ *CollDecr* 145.

¹⁴ Cf. GE 7. 10.

¹⁵ *CollDecr* [418].

¹⁶ *CollDecr* [144].

¹⁷ *CollDecr* 132.

¹⁸ *CollDecr* 131.

¹⁹ Cf. GE 3.

²⁰ *CollDecr* 139.

²¹ *CollDecr* 140 § 1.

²² *CollDecr* 140 § 2.

²³ *CollDecr* 140 § 3.

²⁴ *CollDecr* [316].

²⁵ *CollDecr* 135.

²⁶ *CollDecr* [314].

²⁷ *CollDecr* [417].

²⁸ *CollDecr* 137 § 1.

²⁹ *CollDecr* 137 § 2.

³⁰ OT 5; *CollDecr* 134

³¹ *CollDecr* 134; ES I,30 § 1.

³² Cf. GE introduction, 9.

³³ Cf. decree 33 (relationship of the society to the laity).

³⁴ *CollDecr* 139, [142].