

SIESC - TODAY

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EDITORIAL

School, when and what for ?

Early childhood is a period particularly favourable for learning. According to the countries school or kindergarten attendance of children from 3 to 6 years has been arranged in different forms and following diverse methods. It seems of paramount importance for the ensuing education of many children who acquire or strengthen their command of the language and their aptitude for social relations there. It is a question of valuing the children's competences and helping them to realize them by instilling a sense for the actions of daily life.

The ensuing formation will be the more effective if it happens in a climate of trust. That will come into existence if the teacher perceives the pupil as a person and develops an interest in him/her which surpasses the subject matter taught. That also presupposes that the pupil feels that the teacher is interested in him/her as a human being. One will thus be able to be demanding by making him/her understand that he/she has got value, that he/she is capable of being better, that one trusts in his/her capacities for doing well.

Far from limiting itself to a mere transmission of knowledge, school has got the charge of integrating the pupil in a system of cultural values rooted in specific traditions. It must aim at developing a critical mind as regards the model of social development exclusively founded on economy and at promoting the recognition of human dignity at every level. Aesthetic education by means of the expression of beauty will open the youth to spirituality and will allow him/her to approach transcendence more easily.

Art has not only got that vertical dimension, it has a horizontal dimension, too: it connects human beings above and apart from cultures and epochs. Education in its diverse aspects, intellectual, moral, aesthetic, religious, must open to a dialogue with the others whom it will teach to respect in their diversity. Thus it contributes to forge a culture of peace, for every human being needs living in peace with the other one, and hasn't all the world been called to the beatitude of peacemakers by Jesus Christ?

Agnès ROSE

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SIESC-European Federation of Christian Teachers

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Schule, wann und wozu ?

Die frühe Kindheit ist eine für das Lernen besonders günstige Zeit. In den einzelnen Ländern ist der Schul- oder Kindergartenbesuch der Kinder von 3 bis 6 Jahren in unterschiedlicher Art und nach verschiedenen Methoden eingerichtet worden. Er scheint wesentlich zu sein für die weitere Bildung vieler Kinder, die dort die Beherrschung der Sprache und die Eignung zu sozialen Beziehungen erwerben oder verstärken. Es geht darum, die Kompetenzen der Kinder wertzuschätzen und ihnen zu helfen, sie anzuwenden, sie zu öffnen für ihre Kultur, indem man ihnen einen Sinn für die Handlungen des täglichen Lebens gibt.

Die weiterführende Bildung wird umso wirkungsvoller sein, wenn sie in einem Klima des Vertrauens erfolgt. Das wird entstehen, wenn der/die Lehrende den/die Schüler/in als Person wahrnimmt und für ihn/sie ein Interesse entwickelt, das über den Unterrichtsgegenstand hinausgeht. Das setzt auch voraus, dass der/die Schüler/in spürt, dass der/die Lehrende sich für ihn/sie als menschliches Wesen interessiert. Man wird dann anspruchsvoll sein können, wenn man ihn/sie verstehen lässt, dass er/sie Wert hat, zu Besserem fähig ist, dass man Vertrauen in seine/ihre Fähigkeiten hat, gut zu sein.

Fern davon, sich auf eine einfache Vermittlung von Kenntnissen zu beschränken, hat die Schule die Aufgabe, die Schüler/innen in ein System von kulturellen Werten zu integrieren, die in spezifischen Traditionen verwurzelt sind. Sie muss darauf achten, einen kritischen Sinn zu entwickeln gegenüber dem Modell einer nur auf die Ökonomie allein gegründeten gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung und auf jeder Ebene die Anerkennung der menschlichen Würde zu fördern. Die ästhetische Erziehung wird durch den Ausdruck der Schönheit die Jugendlichen für die Spiritualität öffnen und ihnen ermöglichen, sich leichter der Transzendenz zu nähern.

Die Kunst hat nicht nur diese vertikale Dimension, sie hat auch eine horizontale Dimension: sie verbindet die Menschen über die Kulturen und Zeitalter hinaus. Die Erziehung in ihren unterschiedlichen Formen, intellektuell, moralisch, ästhetisch, religiös, muss zum Dialog mit den anderen öffnen, sie wird lehren sie mit ihren Unterschieden zu achten. So trägt sie dazu bei, eine Kultur des Friedens zu schmieden, da jeder Mensch es nötig hat, in Frieden mit dem anderen zu leben, und ist nicht die ganze Welt durch Jesus Christus zur Seligkeit der Friedensstifter berufen?

Agnès ROSE

L'école, quand et pour quoi ?

La petite enfance est une période particulièrement favorable aux apprentissages. Suivant les pays, la scolarisation des enfants de 3 à 6 ans est développée de manière variable et selon des méthodes diverses. Elle apparaît capitale pour la suite de la formation de beaucoup d'enfants qui y acquièrent ou fortifient la maîtrise du langage et l'aptitude aux relations sociales. Il s'agit de valoriser les compétences des enfants et de les aider à les mettre en oeuvre, de les ouvrir à leur culture en donnant un sens aux gestes de la vie quotidienne.

La formation qui se poursuit sera d'autant plus efficace qu'elle se déroulera dans un climat de confiance. Cela se fera quand l'enseignant perçoit l'élève comme une personne et

développe pour lui un intérêt qui dépasse la matière enseignée. Cela suppose aussi que l'élève sente que l'enseignant s'intéresse à lui comme à un être humain. On pourra alors être exigeant en lui faisant comprendre qu'il a de la valeur, qu'il est capable de mieux, qu'on a confiance dans ses capacités à bien faire.

Loin de se limiter à une simple transmission de connaissances, l'école a la charge d'intégrer l'élève dans un système de valeurs culturelles enracinées dans des traditions spécifiques. Elle doit veiller à développer le sens critique envers le modèle de développement social fondé sur la seule économie et à promouvoir à tout niveau la reconnaissance de la dignité humaine. L'éducation esthétique par l'expression de la beauté ouvrira le jeune à la spiritualité et lui permettra d'accéder plus facilement à la transcendance.

L'art n'a pas seulement cette dimension verticale, il a aussi une dimension horizontale : il relie les hommes au-delà des cultures et par delà les époques. L'éducation sous ses diverses modalités, intellectuelle, morale, esthétique, religieuse, doit ouvrir au dialogue avec les autres qu'elle apprendra à respecter avec leurs diversités. Elle contribue ainsi à forger une culture de paix car tout homme a besoin de vivre en paix avec autrui et tout le monde n'est-il pas appelé par Jésus Christ à la béatitude des artisans de paix ?

Agnès ROSE

SIESC'S LIFE

58th International Meeting at Sankt Pölten July 25th to 30th/31st, 2013

History tells that in the 8th century a monk founded, in the ancient Roman town of Aelium Cetium, in the west of Vienna, the first monastery of the region; it was dedicated to the patron Saint Hippolyt, which was later abbreviated to Sankt Pölten. In 1986 the small town with its numerous Baroque buildings became the capital of the Federal Province of Lower Austria and a complete administrative quarter was constructed in a very modern kind of architecture. It was in its neighbourhood, near to the historical centre, that our Austrian colleagues had invited us for the 58th Annual Meeting into the diocesan house of formation, the Bildungshaus St. Hippolyt. We were received very well by an especially obliging staff. We were about 60 participants from 13 European countries of the West and the East, concerned with a topic proposed by the Austrian association of Christian teachers, the Vereinigung Christlicher Lehrerinnen und Lehrer (VCL).

The "challenges, chances and risks of preschool education of the 3 to 6-year old children" are not questions that only concern the early childhood; for a lot of children they influence their formation as a whole. Those preschool institutions have been developed in very different ways in our various countries and school politics are the object of frequent modifications: comparisons of and exchanges on the challenges and the methods have been very fruitful.

Three talks, language groups and workshops

Ms Agnès Florin from Nantes University, consultant to numerous national and international institutions, paved the ground using the title “Preschool education of little children”. Starting from the needs of little children and the situation of families in Europe, she describes the types of institutions proposed and their objectives; she analyses the effects of early school entrance (“scolarisation”) and its conditions for fundamental learning, mastering the language, aptitude for social relations; she insists on the necessary continuity to later teaching at school and on the relations with the parents and the environment. It is all about valuing the competences of the children and helping them to realize them, opening them to their culture by giving meaning to the actions of everyday life: which is the programme of the declaration of the International Union of Education, adopted at the all-European conference in 2006.

Ms Kerstin Kipp from Ulm University contributes her competence as a specialist of neurosciences, talking on “Support in early childhood: Impulses given by the neurosciences”. Today’s knowledge on the physiological development of the brain and its functioning shows that early childhood is a particularly favourable period for learning. The speaker starts from the analysis of observations about language acquisition, first mastering of grammatical mechanisms, decisive distinction of sounds. The development of the brain is conditioned by the linguistic and social environment; the acquisition of several languages does not ask too much of the children, because they know very quickly how to distinguish them. The neurosciences make the plasticity of the brain evident, but it is only activated by emotions provoking it, first of all if they are positive.

Ms Gabriele Bäck from the Charlotte Bühler Institute at Vienna presents “The FormationFrameworkProgramme for elementary institutions of formation in all federal states of Austria”, in which she has collaborated in the context of this institute. It is arranged around 6 competences which pervade the course of activities in the kindergartens: emotions and social relations, ethics and society, language and communication, movement and health, aesthetics and creativity, nature and technology. Those are implied in a dynamic process of “transitions”, i.e. of successive stages of structuring necessary for passing from one situation to another one. The pedagogical quality of institutions will to a large degree determine the success of the FrameworkProgramme.

The work groups using one main language and another one if necessary were accepted very well; they confronted the



Kerstin KIPP and Annelore HECKER



Sankt Pölten

contributions of the talks and each participant’s experience as teacher, parent or grandparent.

The presentation of the French “*école maternelle*” given by Gaby Gaspard and Sylvie Paquet supplemented the Austrian talk by means of an account and a discussion on one other important national reality of long standing and practice.

The workshop on Alfred Adler’s “psychology of individuality” applied to pedagogy was animated by Gisela Gerhardt. It refers to the process of the success of pupils, and also of their teachers.

Guided tours, conviviality, prayer

The guided tours of the old town and the administrative quarter facilitated a glimpse on its history and its numerous contacts and exchanges with its neighbours, particularly with the abbey of Melk. The very cordial receptions at the Town Hall and the administrative quarter of the Bundesland were both appreciated thoroughly.

The trip by coach to Klosterneuburg made us pass the hills of the Wienerwald, the north-easternmost foothills of the Alpine range. The little town is dominated by an impressive ensemble of buildings dating back to the 18th century, an imperial palace far from the capital, which you perceive nevertheless, and a Baroque monastery, which was first founded in the 12th century by Augustine monks.

The optional excursion took us across the mountains first to the Cistercian abbey Stift Lilienfeld, where we were welcomed by the abbot. A guided tour of the magnificent Gothic church and the abbey buildings given by happy monks. A rather chilly picnic on the banks of the Erlaufsee. Then a long afternoon at Mariazell, the grand place of pilgrimages of Central Europe dedicated to the Magna Mater Austriae; several times



Mariazell

destroyed due to invasions and reconstructed, the church with its three towers is always frequented by large numbers of pilgrims; a priest from the centre of Africa, staying there for studies, celebrated mass for us, and one of us accompanied the songs and the meditation on his violin, which resounded in the abbey church.

Not to speak of the Sunday afternoon left to each one's disposal for a quick visit to Vienna or to the sumptuous abbey of Stift Melk, or for a trip on the Danube in the Wachau at the very season of apricots.

Together with the meals in the house, the free time in the evenings, the conversations in the corridors, the coffee and the drinks at the cafeteria, the guided tours and the trips are privileged moments of various exchanges. They make out of SIESC meetings international encounters in a very great freedom, in which you participate as you are, as an individual person, without any other mission but to enrich yourself by the direct acquaintance with colleagues from other countries and through them with international situations.

Praying together has its place there quite simply; prepared in our different languages, it opens the days. We didn't have any priests among us; before his departure on holidays the spiritual rector of the house welcomed us to the mass in the chapel, and we participated together with the inhabitants of Sankt Pölten in the Sunday mass at the cathedral. You know perhaps that the SIESC is acknowledged as an international Catholic association without any special chaplain, but with the chaplains of our respective movements.

On our website you will find the texts of the talks in English, French and German and a lot of other information on the SIESC (www.siesc.eu).

Yves CALAIS



A group visiting the city.

Welcome to Slovenia, Prešern's town Kranj expects you !

Dear members and friends of SIESC,

We cordially invite you to the 59th Annual Meeting of SIESC:
Art, Spirituality, Education
 July 23rd to 27th / 28th, 2014

At a time when the future is so uncertain, when beauty is no longer beautiful and we talk about the aesthetics of ugliness, when we proclaim self-realization as the heyday of life, at a time when we reduce the number of lessons of art and music, many educators are increasingly aware of the responsibility for the whole personality approach in education.

Plato already argued that there are three core values: truth, goodness and beauty. We add holiness to these. Consequently, the education system should be built on a quest for truth (formation), developing a sense for goodness (ethical education), developing a sense for beauty (aesthetic education). Thus we can help young people to get into contact with the sacred, with transcendence more easily (religious education).

Therefore, our meeting will primarily concentrate on topics of aesthetic education, which through the experience of beauty opens human beings to spirituality. We promise you a lot of joyful moments when listening to choral songs and visiting mosaics and monuments of architecture in Kranj and Ljubljana.

The town of Kranj is situated at the confluence of the Sava and the Kokra rivers in the heart of the pre-alpine region and

is connected to the international train and plane net. It is only 9 km away from the central Slovenian airport Joze Pučnik-Brnik and 25 km from the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana.

In the picturesque town with its many attractions you will be accommodated in a youth hostel near the town centre (<http://www.dsd-kranj.si>).

Along with many other surprises during the whole meeting you will be able to explore the karst and the world-famous Škocjan Cave during the optional excursion.



Kranj

DKPS Slovenia and SIESC look forward to meeting you in Prešern's town Kranj. (Prešern was our greatest poet).

Marija Žabjek, President of DKPS

Dobrodošli v Sloveniji, Prešernovo mesto Kranj vas pričakuje!

Dragi člani in prijatelji SIESCA!

Vabimo vas na 59. Srečanje SIESCa od 23. do 27/28. julija 2014 z naslovom: Umetnost, duhovnost in vzgoja.

V času, ko je prihodnost negotova, ko lepota, ni več lepa, ampak se pogovarjamo o estetiki grdega, v času, ko razglušamo samouresničitev kot višek smisla življenja, v času, ko se krčijo ure likovnega in glasbenega pouka, se mnogi vedno bolj zavedamo odgovornosti za celostno oblikovanje mladega človeka.

Že Platon je trdil, da so tri temeljne vrednote: resnica, dobrot in lepota. Mi k temu dodajamo tudi svetost. Zato naj bi se izobraževalni sistem gradil na iskanju resnice (izobraževanje), razvijanju čuta za dobro (etična vzgoja), razvijanju občutka za lepo (estetska vzgoja, umetnost), da bi človek prišel v stik s svetim, s presežnim (religiozna vzgoja). Zato želimo na našem posvetu odpirati predvsem teme estetske vzgoje (umetnost), ki preko doživljanja lepote, človeka odpira k presežnemu.

Srečanje bo v Sloveniji, v Kranju, ki je 25 kilometrov oddaljeno od glavnega mesta Slovenije, Ljubljane. V bližini je letališče in železniška postaja. Kranj je slikovito mesto z mnogimi znamenitostmi, ki leži med sotočjem Kokre in Save, v osrčju predalpskega sveta.

Poleg mnogih presenečenj, koralnega petja, literarnih izzivov, arhitekturnih znamenitosti, si bomo lahko na ekskurziji ogledali tudi kras in svetovno znane Škocjanske jame.

Nastanjeni boste v študentskem domu blizu centra mesta, <http://www.dsd-Kranj.si/>.

Dobrodošli v Sloveniji, Prešernovo mesto Kranj vas pričakuje!

Marija Žabjek

Oecumenical life, life of the Church

Rome and Moscow

Since the election of Pope Francis the relationship between Rome and Moscow has obviously been rekindled. Metropolitan bishop Hilarion, in the Patriarchate of Moscow responsible for exterior relations, came to Rome for an oecumenical day and was received by the Pope for a long meeting. Cardinal Angelo Scola, archbishop of Milano, was received by Patriarch Kyrill in Moscow. On the political level the Pope received President Putin. And in public the question which is always present with Catholics is raised: "Can a meeting between the Pope and the Patriarch of Moscow soon be envisaged?"

There was a cooling down under John Paul II, whom Patriarch Alexis had refused to receive, because he together with the responsible persons of the Russian-Orthodox Church considered the attitude of the Catholic Church in Russia and in Orthodox countries as unacceptable proselytism. That was because of the vitality of the churches united to Rome, and particularly the Greek-Catholic Church of Ukraine, even if from their side their members felt themselves supported by Rome only with a lot of precautions. That was because of the creation of four Catholic dioceses in Russia in 2002. That was still the consequence of Rome's pressure for a meeting between the Pope and the Patriarch before the European Oecumenical Meeting at Graz in 1997. The Russian distrust in a Polish pope was undoubtedly not unimportant for that.

With Benedict XVI, then Patriarch Kyrill, the climate began to change. On both sides the convergences on the role of Christianity for European identity, on religious freedom in the world and on the support to Christians in Syria and the Middle East were appreciated. The personalities of Francis and Kyrill are particularly open-minded.

In the world of today, just as it is, the reconciliation of the Christians is, even more than yesterday, an urgent task for our testimony of Jesus Christ. "That they may be one ... so that the world may believe", Jesus prayed, as tells the gospel according to Saint John. Reconciliation advances, most often so discreetly that the public opinion, which is more attentive to difficulties and polemics, doesn't even notice it at all. Let's go on with our work, each one in his/her place, with the grace of God.

Yves CALAIS

What's the use of PISA?

It was the ambition of educational studies in the last decades to make achievements in schools globally comparable. That was particularly aimed at by the OECD by means of the PISA studies.

In order to reach that aim, it was on the one hand necessary to neutralize or relativize strictly speaking what is the core of education, school, and teaching: growing into cultural systems of values which obviously are not globally valid, but rooted in specific national and regional traditions and needs. PISA doesn't measure formation and education, but skills and knowledge reduced to comparable items.

On the other hand the OECD is an organization for commerce and economy, which first of all is concerned with economic interests and doesn't aim at the best possible formation and education for pupils, but the best possible employability of working power and the most economic deployment of means, which can also be seen in the treacherous choice of words such as "input" and "output".

Because of the fitting presentation and advertising PISA ranking lists have, however, become "evaluations" of the educational systems, whose publication politicians, journalists, and unfortunately educational scientists „must“ attend to and react to quickly, frequently even before they have had time to study the results thoroughly. The selection of the results published and commented on is often directed at affirming one's own opinion and exaggerated expressions are used such as "downfall", "educational catastrophe" etc. If later unexcited and differentiated studies are presented by meticulous readers of the studies, they are no more published or not acknowledged.

The most fatal effect of the overestimation of PISA results is the increase of "learning to the test". Persons responsible for education and teachers try to make their pupils and schools be in a better position, by adapting the contents of formation to those tested by PISA and by training the pupils in tasks and methods of PISA testing. Contents, capacities, and attitudes not included in PISA are, therefore, at best driven back and at worst ignored.

"Victories" in PISA competitions can be Pyrrhic victories, if they lead to concentrating on contents and skills contributing little to education, to asking too much of the pupils (sometimes resulting in an increase of the suicide rate), and to parents spending exorbitant financial means for private coaching.

The administration of PISA tests in itself demands high amounts of the taxpayers' money, which could perhaps be better used for improvements in the school system.

In any case we should read PISA results meticulously, examine the value of what they say and thus relativize them, we should not subordinate the concept and the contents of education and formation to the demands of PISA or even simply pull out of PISA.

Wolfgang Rank, President of SIESC

NEWS FROM MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

Austria - VCL

In an editorial the president of the VCL, Isabella Zins, admonishes :

Back to the essentials: Focus on pedagogy

The central questions ought to be: Where is an improvement of the basic conditions in schools really necessary (e.g. at the transitions in the formation system, in the equipment of the buildings ...), where is it possible (taking into account the present number of teachers and the societal data) and what is the state able and willing to afford at all in a realistic concept? What national efforts – by far exceeding the world of schools – must be made in order to support children of strata at a distance to culture more effectively? How will teachers and parents become genuine partners in education and formation? How can pedagogues of today do justice to their central task, teaching and passing on sustainable knowledge, in the best way?

That's what I see as a task of the VCL, too: strengthening in the media the voices of those who are unmasking, by means of common sense and factual expertise, the plans of the minister of education directed towards a unified comprehensive school (*sc. for the 10-14-year old pupils*) and warning more and more intensively of the development threatening Austria.

With a view at the sword of Damocles "Bank guarantees for billions" dangling over our ministry of finances everybody demanding a complete change of the system appears as a charlatan. For it would, as has been proved, be connected with exorbitantly high costs and a high increase of personnel – which in times of a financial crisis and a shortage of teachers can only be a misleading packaging! Let's stay on realistic ground! Whoever takes over the department of education after the elections, will be well advised to appreciate the pedagogues of all levels from the kindergarten to the university and to take their expertise seriously, to listen to the school partners and to grant the schools more leeway in organization together with less bureaucracy. What is more important than any turning of wheels of the system is reconsidering "pedagogy" and "relationship" on the basis of great factual competence. I was confirmed in that conviction by "Persönlichkeit und Beziehung als Grundlage der Pädagogik" (Personality and relationship as the basis of pedagogy), a collection of articles edited by the German scientist Jochen Krautz, which keeps the role of the teachers in focus in a lot of articles. Just one thought taken from there, which could accompany you during the school year as motivated and self-assured teachers :

On the social competence of teachers:

„Social competence contains the teacher's capacity to give time and attention to the group of pupils and particularly the single pupil and to create a trustful and positive climate of teaching and conversing. That happens only if teachers

notice pupils as persons and develop an interest in them which exceeds the pure achievement in the subject and also takes into consideration the emotional situation of the pupil. (...) For pupils it is important that they get the feeling that the teachers teaching them are interested in them as human beings. It goes without saying that in the process maintaining the distance between adult and youngster, educator and entrusted person, and the professional difference between teachers and pupils must actively be taken into account."

Isabella ZINS

France - CdEP

At the national meeting 2013 of CdEP at Lille, Marie Denecker, professor at a "difficult" comprehensive school at Tourcoing, made a passionate statement in order to pass on the fruits of her experiences since 1997. The "international" team of CdEP presents some striking passages to you.

Humanism at school

You must have strength of character to be a good pupil. It's us who have to play a role here by being demanding: not being content with the minimum, pushing the most motivated ones onwards, giving an example of strictness in one's form of organizing oneself, of presenting one's ideas, entering on difficult matters acknowledging that they are difficult (in 7th grade: mastering the subjunctive past tense...). For me that is a question of replacing mediocrity, the pleasure of doing nothing by the pleasure of work. I don't leave them any minute of breathing-space (first of all to limit damage), but above all to remind them that they are there to go on in the direction of the evolution. [...]

At that comprehensive school reconciliation/redemption exists, in the form of regulations such as progress reports, codes of behaviour, parent-teacher meetings ... that works sometimes, that demands a lot of energy and time. The pupil feels looked after, observed, and that's perhaps exactly what he missed. [...]

Coming back to the place of pardoning in education, the pupils recognize its value if it is accompanied by great firmness, intransigence and a certain exigency towards them. You must pardon without smiling. I pardon you: you are an adolescent, I am an adult, but I expect something else of you, you can be somebody else (typical remarks if I tell them: "if you were my son/my daughter". A new relationship to them, which is no more a relationship marked by power, but by confidence). Everything is not spoken with power, but without talking to them about reconciliation, you must make them understand that they are valuable, that they are capable of being better, and you must begin by reconciling them with themselves. They often don't love themselves. It remains an ideal to have the least things possible to pardon, imposing one's own way of procedure. [...]

Two good ways of diverting violence: indifference - I refuse being made nervous, because it has no place here in my class – and humour, combined with calmness, sprinkled with

one or two a little complex expressions. I am not touched, because I keep the use of my reason, which will be stronger than your breakers of fury. And when the course goes on well with the class, and if you succeed in turning them against the violent pupil by making them laugh, the tension is reduced and you can go on. [...]

I leave a large space inside me for laughing about myself (that's what I learnt to do when I became a teacher, and by living together with my husband!), I believe in progress, I think that passion is contagious, and I believe in the power of prayer. I dare hope that some pupils will, once they have become adults, remember the values which I have tried to pass on to them: the pleasure of work; the priority of humour to violence; the vital essence of literature, the book, scripture; the price of life, humility; the need one feels of living in peace with the others ... I will only have said everything after having reminded of how precious my colleagues are for me, and above all my family life.

Marie Denecker's complete statement can be found on the CdEP website www.cdep-asso.org: button : actualité de CdEP - au plan national - l'humanisme à l'école ?

Italy - UCIIM

Éducing to peace in a christian perspective

For the "World Peace Day" of 2004 Pope John Paul II reaffirmed, as Paul VI already in 1968, the reasons for being concerned with peace and peace education. "For a Christian, proclaiming peace means announcing Jesus Christ, who is "our peace" (*Eph 2, 14*), i.e. call all the world to the beatitude of "peacemakers" (*Mt 5, 9*)."

But thinking about the religious education as a strategy of education to peace is by no means obvious: religion has always aroused issues, has created divisions, supported the parties at war, it has been taken as a justification to incite racism or to oppress minorities. And yet it has also spurred hopes of liberation and fullness of human fulfillment.

At the educational level, religion has often been accused of being the source and cause of indoctrination, of psychological subjection, of existential distress. However, it may be or become a learning resource with great features and values.

In this sense, it is fundamental the «quality» of the educational commitment that we implement.

A religious education for peace has to stimulate **primarily** the formation of a mindset and a culture of peace. This training goes in three directions :

1. An education that develops *the critical sense* of the social development model and its fundamental economic, consumerism, efficientism;
2. An education that *develops* in a positive way the *ambivalent cultural trends* of our times: having VS being, producing VS acting, freedom VS solidarity, culture VS cultures, global VS local, immanence VS transcendence;

3. An education that teaches the *truth about man*: a true peace is not possible if we do not promote, at all levels, the recognition of the dignity of the human being; every human being is a person and therefore he is subject to rights and obligations arising from his nature, which are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable.

A second level consists of the consolidation of the personal structure, so as to be people of peace and builders of peace :

1. by supporting the formation of a good personal identity in order to be persons capable of awareness, critical thinking, of a severe reading of the present times, but also of an opening dialogue with others, of trust in the potentialities of the good that every man has as his own "ontological endowment»;
2. by favoring the constitution and consolidation of some fundamental attitudes such as: awareness of our limitations and our strengths, respect for others and the laws; defense and promotion of our inner consciousness and of the freedom of people; practice of reflection and personal research and for comparison; practice of calm, self-control and decision-making, of courage and fortitude; interiority and silence, of relationships and sharings, of spirit of sacrifice and effective commitment, of being able to rejoice inside and with others.

The testimony of a common way to truth, respecting even deep reaching diversities, can already be in itself significant of peace culture and peace education.

Don Carlo Nanni
"La scuola e l'uomo", no. 3-4, 2013

Slovenia - DKPS

The DKPS present some reflections on the topic of the meeting in July.

LITERATURE AND SPIRITUALITY : their relationship in British and American literature

There has always been a special relationship between literature and spirituality. Literature even appears to be one of the most frequent media featuring the transcendent. Since literature in the English language is most widely read globally, it seems reasonable to examine the role of the spiritual dimension in a few English and American bestsellers which have won international critical acclaim.

It is generally true that spirituality can be revealed through all literary elements : themes, plots, characters, chronotopes and atmosphere. It is present in all genres, in books for adults and children. Pat Pinsent, a researcher of English and American literature, claims that in children's lite-

Poland - KIK

ature it is expressed above all through wonder and admiration¹. Such a spiritual quality is typical also of the books of J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1955)², and C.S. Lewis, the writer of the *Chronicles of Narnia*³ (1947–1956). In the fiction of both authors Christian values play an important role. They remain obvious also in successful adaptations for film, theatre and other media.

Among contemporary English authors who relatively explicitly expose their spiritual values, ranks David Almond, the 2010 winner of the Andersen Award⁴. His novel *Skellig* leads the reader to consider ideas about the role of mystery in life. The text incorporates obvious religious references and it successfully addresses readers of all ages. The same is true about the American novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (H. Lee, 1961). This narrative focuses on the consequences of the decision to act in accordance with Christian moral standards. Another American novel, *Sophie's Choice* (W. Styron, 1979), is an example of a book for mature audience only, as it presents the spiritual struggle in a dilemma and the moral suffering caused by fatal decisions taken in absolutely adversary circumstances.

Among 20th century literary figures, Graham Greene, novelist and playwright, was one of those who let the Catholic faith resonate in books. In *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1955) moral decisions are strongly linked to theology and belief. Similarly, Catholicism plays an important role in the books of Evelyn Waugh. For instance, in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), the narrator reaches a point of belief after an earlier period of scepticism. The books of both English authors were cinematized and the non-print media adaptations directed the attention of the general public to their literary oeuvres.

These few examples from English and American literature show that despite several new media, literature with its spiritual dimension not only remains present but it continues to be one of the sources for reflection on moral values and thus an inspiration in today's world.

Darja MAZI-LESKOVAR

¹ Pat Pinsent, P.(2001), »Religious Mystery and Children's Literature,» in (ed.) Gavin,A & Routledge,C. *Mystery in Children's Literature: From the Rational to the Supernatural*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

² The works of J. R. R. Tolkien have also served as inspiration to painters, musicians and writers.

³ His fantasy masterpieces have also addressed huge audiences through highly successful movies and theatre adaptations.

⁴ This is sometimes also called the Nobel Prize for Children's Literature.

On the death of Tadeusz Mazowiecki

On October 28th, 2013 the Society of KIK (Catholic Intellectual Society) experienced a great loss. This day was marked by the death of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, one of the founding fathers of our Society and a member of its authorities for many years. He was a man of deep faith, formed by the thoughts of the French philosophers and theologians Jaques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier, and also an admirer of the open Church and promoter of the introduction of the changes initiated by Pope John XXIII.

It is the entire Poland which shares this loss. The man has passed away whom the Poles should be thankful for regaining their independence. The transition from a communist state to a democratic country was achieved without bloodshed: In August 1981 Tadeusz Mazowiecki was one of the most important counselors of Lech Wałęsa and the striking workmen in the Gdansk Shipyard, and then supported the trade union Solidarność ("Solidarity"). Interned after the introduction of the martial law in December 1981, he was liberated among the last ones. At the end of the 80'ties he again participated in strikes against the communist authorities. He was a prudent and cautious man, and as a politician consistent and persevering. As a result of the strike a "Round Table" Discussion was achieved, which led to the first partially free elections. By winning this election, Tadeusz Mazowiecki became the first non-communist Prime Minister in Central–Eastern Europe. Thanks to his personality, as he always understood the need of dialogue and respect for the others, he formed generations of people – decent men and conscious citizens, and also assured the respect and appreciation of re-born Poland.

After his departure from active politics in 1991 Mazowiecki was appointed Special Envoy on the Situation of Human Rights in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia. He stepped down in 1995 in protest at what he regarded as the international community's insufficient response to atrocities committed during the Bosnian war, particularly the Srebrenica massacre committed by the Serb army that year.

At the end of his long life, strictly devoted to the work for his country, he became the counselor of President Bronisław Komorowski.

We say goodbye with great sorrow and awareness of how grateful we should be for what he has done for us.

Małgorzata WOJCIECHOWSKA

A note from the editor

SIESC-TODAY publishes articles of two types :

1/ It provides information concerning the life of SIESC and international affairs : for this SIESC governing body takes on full responsibility.

2/ On their authors' own responsibility, it publishes information coming from member and partner associations as well as from guests to allow them to put into dialogue their own positions and to lead readers to think about these positions which can not be shared by everybody.

OUR BEST THANKS TO OUR TRANSLATORS

