

SIESC - TODAY

English Edition

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ÉDITORIAL

Confidence between human beings, between Europeans, with the help of the Lord

How to guarantee an education of quality for all and to improve the teaching methods in order to form our pupils so that they become men and women of today? A fundamentally pedagogical attitude puts the emphasis on the strong points of the children, thus giving them confidence in themselves and the conscience of their proper value. We will therefore preserve or even awaken their joy in learning. Which pedagogical instruments to use? They are divers, the use of the digital world is one amongst others. It's necessary to understand it in order to master it better. At the same time, however, one will transmit the riches of culture which help to confront the problems of today and one will develop creativity, innovation and collaboration.

Being conscious of the solidarity between the members of one and the same community, "searching in everything that is said and written the factors that unite instead of systematically stressing those which oppose", these are duties for those who desire to cultivate the spirit of Europe and the recognition of common values and fraternity in Europe. The mobility of every citizen in the European Union is encouraged, when in it the recognition of his/her competences and qualifications are guaranteed. Thanks to the Euro e-Portfolio every citizen can realize his/her proper European citizenship.

In our very secularized environment our Christian communities become aware of their weakness, but also the power of a more authentic faith and testimony in the world of our lives and our professions. Let's make efforts to make our professional lives and our spiritual lives coherent. Let's ask God to bless all those who live around us. Let's exercise our intellectual duty to understand the human situations. Let's be makers of peace in the domain of relationships. Let's make God's word audible in the life of the world. Preparing the ways of the Lord for the others and for ourselves, isn't that our "very humble but essential vocation"?

Agnès ROSE

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SIESC-European Federation of Christian Teachers

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Confiance entre hommes, entre Européens, avec l'appui du Seigneur

Comment garantir une éducation de qualité pour tous et améliorer les méthodes d'enseignement pour former nos élèves à devenir de hommes et des femmes d'aujourd'hui ? Une attitude pédagogique fondamentale met l'accent sur les points forts des enfants, leur donnant ainsi confiance en eux-mêmes et conscience de leur propre valeur. Nous préserverons alors ou même éveillerons la joie d'apprendre. Quels outils pédagogiques utiliser ? Ils sont divers, le numérique en est un parmi d'autres. Il faut le comprendre pour mieux le maîtriser. Tout à la fois on transmettra les richesses de la culture qui aident à affronter les problèmes d'aujourd'hui et l'on développera la créativité, l'innovation et la collaboration.

Avoir conscience de la solidarité entre membres d'une même communauté, «rechercher en tout ce qui se dit et ce qui s'écrit les facteurs qui unissent au lieu de souligner systématiquement ceux qui opposent» sont des devoirs pour qui désire cultiver l'esprit européen et la reconnaissance des valeurs communes et de la fraternité en Europe. La mobilité de chaque citoyen européen dans l'Union Européenne est encouragée, la reconnaissance de ses compétences et qualifications y étant garantie. Grâce à l'Euro e-Portfolio chaque citoyen peut exercer sa propre citoyenneté européenne.

Dans notre environnement très sécularisé, nos communautés chrétiennes prennent conscience de leur faiblesse mais aussi de la force d'une foi et d'un témoignage plus authentique dans notre milieu de vie et de travail. Efforçons-nous de rendre cohérentes notre vie professionnelle et notre vie spirituelle. Demandons à Dieu qu'Il bénisse tous ceux qui nous entourent. Exerçons notre devoir d'intelligence pour comprendre les situations humaines. Soyons des faiseurs de paix dans l'espace relationnel. Rendons audible la Parole de Dieu dans la vie du monde. Préparer les chemins du Seigneur pour les autres et pour nous, n'est-ce pas là notre «vocation très humble mais essentielle» ?

Agnès ROSE

Vertrauen unter Menschen, unter Europäern, mit Hilfe des Herrn

Wie kann man eine qualitätsvolle Bildung und Erziehung für alle garantieren und die Unterrichtsmethoden verbessern, um unsere Schüler/innen dazu zu bilden, Männer und Frauen von heute zu werden? Eine grundsätzliche pädagogische Haltung legt den Akzent auf die Stärken der Kinder und gibt ihnen so Vertrauen in sich selbst und ein Bewusstsein ihres eigenen Werts. Wir werden also die Freude am Lernen bewahren oder sogar wecken. Welche pädagogischen Werkzeuge sollen wir nutzen? Sie sind unterschiedlich, der Einsatz der digitalen Welt ist eines unter anderen. Man muss sie verstehen, um sie besser zu beherrschen. Doch gleichzeitig wird man die Reichtümer der Kultur vermitteln, die helfen, sich den Problemen von heute zu stellen, und man wird Kreativität, Innovation und Zusammenarbeit entwickeln.

Sich der Solidarität zwischen den Mitgliedern derselben Gemeinschaft bewusst zu sein, „in allem, was man sagt und was man schreibt, die Faktoren herauszusuchen, die verbinden, statt systematisch die hervorzuheben, die zu Gegnern machen“, das sind Verpflichtungen für alle, die den Geist Europas und die Anerkennung der gemeinsamen Werte und der Geschwisterlichkeit in Europa zu fördern verlangen. Zur Mobilität jedes europäischen Bürgers in der Europäischen Union wird ermutigt, wenn die Anerkennung seiner Kompetenzen und Qualifikationen dabei garantiert wird. Danke dem Euro e-Portfolio kann jede/r Bürger/in das eigene europäische Bürgersein verwirklichen.

In unserer sehr säkularisierten Umwelt werden sich unsere christlichen Gemeinschaften ihrer Schwäche bewusst, aber auch der Stärke eines authentischeren Glaubens und Zeugnisses in unserer Lebens- und Arbeitswelt. Bemühen wir uns, unser berufliches Leben und unser spirituelles Leben übereinzustimmen! Bitten wir Gott, alle die zu segnen, die um uns leben! Erfüllen wir unsere intellektuelle Verpflichtung, die menschlichen Situationen zu verstehen! Seien wir „Macher des Friedens“ in Bereich der Beziehungen! Machen wir das Wort Gottes im Leben der Welt hörbar! Die Wege des Herrn für die anderen und für uns zu bereiten, ist das nicht unsere „sehr bescheidene, aber wesentliche Berufung“?

Agnès ROSE

SIESC'S LIFE

A few words from the president Change and continuity

Just like anything human, SIESC is continually changing. That's especially true after Yves Calais' death. He was, together and after Jan Nuchelmans, the embodiment of SIESC. For decades he was the soul, the ideologist, the expert in legal questions, the author of numerous articles for SIESC-Today, and, as he himself liked it best, counsellor of SIESC. Focussing on meaning and aim of SIESC, he has always enriched and influenced the contents of the meetings. His contribution to SIESC was invaluable. It's now the task of the members of the Executive Board to make his contribution not irreplaceable. SIESC is, as he always stressed, a meeting-place for individual Christian teachers of all denominations and of all forms and levels of schools in Europe. A special concern is the understanding of cultural changes and their effects on teaching in the Europe of today and pointing out the close connection between professional life and religious life, as we stress in the presentation of SIESC. In all those efforts Yves remains a shining example for us.

In the future Executive Board there will have to be found a new efficient distribution of tasks. That's also needed because of the change in the presidency. As I promised, I'm going to continue collaborating in the second rank, particularly with our intention to offer all the talks and publications in the three SIESC languages.

For that aim we are still searching for colleagues who translate texts or re-read texts.

The Executive Board will develop the new distribution of tasks and will, in cooperation with the presidents of the member associations, work towards keeping in mind another aim of SIESC in the future: SIESC wants to provide a European platform for mutual information and the objectives of the various national associations of Christian teachers and their members. And in European countries where there is no Christian teachers' organisation SIESC wishes to receive, by means of contacts with individual colleagues, information about the developments in those countries and to provide information and aid by its publications (e. g. its website).

For all these (continuing) objectives and tasks I ask for good cooperation.

Wolfgang RANK



Farewell, Yves !

At Yves's burial, SIESC was represented by Christine and Dominique Antoine, Pierrette Bournez and Pierre-François and I. We attended the religious ceremony in a crowded church. Faithful to his philosophy and in due respect to the various groups he worked with, Yves had wished for a celebration of the Gospel and not a holy mass.

His children and grand-children, deeply affected and with words of love, spoke of his warm presence, kindness and listening gifts.

Françoise and their daughter Agnès, very kindly sent us the documents that were used during the service. With the help of father Banet's notes, I will give the main lines of his address. In so doing, I hope those who have known Yves will be able to remember some delightful and friendly moments shared with him. Father Banet chose three words to characterize Yves's commitments : truth, dialogue and communion.

Truth – For modern philosophers, the research of truth requests a method, a critical mind and a thorough questioning, just like walking along a path. For the men in Biblical times, it was also a path but the method was based on the love of brothers and a lively compassion – ps 85 « Love and truth converge » - Yves's bond to the truth of his life was neither blurred, nor pretentious or dogmatic.

Dialogue – As Yves is concerned, we should say « dialogues ». Dialogues with all kinds of beliefs, either religious, philosophical or humanistic ... « A true dialogue doesn't lead to anything soft, vague or ambiguous. If someone looking for truth is welcome with warmth and attention, the dialogue leads to a better and deeper understanding on both sides. It is a real skill that helps each one to discover the best in the other and this best to take root in each one. The aim of a dialogue between religions is not a merger but peace in the world and thanks to the spiritual wealth existing on every side, we are all invited to work together. »

Communion – It is the real aim of oecumenical dialogue. « The Catholic rites commemorate the resurrection of Christ that is already at work through the life history of our friend Yves. »

« For us, Yves has been a sign of human greatness and dignity but also of high spirituality. »

Yves had written a few notes about his teaching life and his many commitments. In his conclusion, we can read : - « A retirement dedicated to Jesus in the service of the Church, always means a service to men and women. For a long time, the years spent as a student, then as a teacher and my commitments in the social sphere have always preserved a needed balance in my life. There, one becomes « poor », no longer owner of one's time, while « making peace » among people. This blissful course seems to have been naturally imprinted in a lifetime »

Nicole BALU

Yves in his diocese

It was during the on-call time in Paris for the movement ACMEC (Catholic Action of Christian Educators, see SIESC-Actuel no 47 January 2011) and through Marie Le Rouzic (well known to some of the SIESC members) that I first heard of Yves Calais who was managing the University Parish. Later, I had the pleasure of personally meeting him and his wife in Besançon.

On my second visit to Besançon I had the opportunity to hear him speak in his diocese, where he was in charge of ecumenism (the first ever layman in France in this function). At other times I assisted his talks on Jewish Christian relations and during Christian unity weeks.... On one such occasion he gladly accepted to call on the college where I taught and talk about Passover in the Jewish tradition, a very appropriate theme for Lent we were celebrating at the time of his visit.

Yves, as you all know, was always very open to others and very warm-hearted towards people interested in culture. This quality allowed him to capture his audiences during numerous conferences he had given. I would especially like to mention the Heritage Days at the Diocesan Centre, the former grand seminary, where I had the pleasure of listening to him and where he enjoyed his role of a historical and at the same time spiritual guide, showing how faith had manifested itself during different transformations and times- and helping to implement the work of the Second Vatican Council.

He devoted a lot of his time and passion to the Diocesan Centre, where among others he was a member of the Cultural Commission heedful of his duty (organizing concerts, expositions...) supportive to the growth in a real spirit of openness.

Yves was present at the launching of the Diocesan Radio and during its different evolutions, having already taken part in a short Christian review for the local public radio station. We were members of the same team including 6 other people catholic and prot-

estant (priests, male and female pastors, lay) taking turns to give a one-and-a-half-minute talk on the Radio-Bleue (local public radio) every Sunday morning. This continued until the diocese launched its own Radio Horizon which later became RCF (French Christian Radio). He was very attached to this radio where he regularly spoke and which he developed.

Yves was also a person of great influence in the addition of the Ronchamp monastery for the Clarisse sisters next to the famous chapel built by Le Corbusier.

Yves Calais: a man very close through his simplicity, Man of Culture and Faith, always there right from the start.... in the spirit of the Gospel, guided by the vision of the Second Vatican Council. He knew how to ally his family life to all his engagements.

THANK YOU, Yves and Françoise; we strongly feel his presence among us.

Pierrette BOURNEZ (Besançon -France)

Yves, our brother

First memory of Yves at the SIESC: an agile 70 years-old man goofing around as he joined a group performing at Salzbouurg that night: how kind and full of energy he was! I often admired his resilience, a trait that he shared with Françoise, as demonstrated when visiting the Turda salt mine in July 2016.

All of us who had a chance to get know him and work with him could appreciate his mind clarity and his deep knowledge. His peaceful word and his wise advices made everything look easier, not only when we gathered, but also at meetings. He inspired us, and was bringing us to a kind of emotional intelligence. Yves believed that we had this "intelligence duty" for christians from CdEP as much as for christians from SIESC. Understanding human behaviors was one of his recurring topic. He also had a strong knowledge about sacred texts and about arts: when we were on a touristic tour, his comments and stories had quite a lot of attention.

Our train rides to München gave me the chance to discuss more personal topics with him, about teaching, politics, or what happened in the world... but also happy or sad family times, and he would always find the right words. You could speak about everything with him: he was so open-minded, funny and respectful... even more when talking with people who didn't share his beliefs as the faithful man he was.

And such a strong faith he had. Yves probably drew his energy from that unshakeable trust in God. In a mail for Easter-Pesah-Pâques 2015 for Judeo-Christian friendship, Yves mentioned that he often prayed the last part of psalm 32: Let thy mercy (he also mentioned in his comments: goodness, kindness, faith, grace), O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee. He added a second one: Let our hope, be in You, as much as Your

love is upon us. And then a last one: Let our hope, be in You, as much as Your hope is upon us, as God not only put hopes in his creatures so they can live, but also as the tremendous hope He has in us despite our limits and failures.

There are no words to fully describe how much we miss our friend. All our thoughts to Françoise and her family.

Christine ANTOINE

Yves and SIESC -Actuel

Thirty years ago, during the SIESC meeting at St Jacques de Compostela, the first issue of *SIESC aktuell/SIESC actuel* was distributed to the participants. We can be thankful to Yves for what has become our regular newsletter and his reflections which he had so generously shared with us all. Indeed, Yves contributed regularly to SIESC-Actuel from the 2nd issue of November 1988 until the 58th issue of July 2016.

In the beginnings of our newsletter he took over the humble but essential tasks like typing of handwritten texts or finding a printing house. There were also his discrete and demanding, rigorous and effective interventions in proof reading of French translations of the submitted articles.

There were above all his own articles, the positive tone, the density and clarity of which we greatly appreciated. These included annual reports of our summer meetings, from time to time completed by a text reflecting on the theme treated and regular as well as hearty information on ecumenical life and interreligious dialogue. We could also count on him for writing obituaries, not necessarily under his own name, which were both kind and remindful of colleagues who left their mark on the life of SIESC.

We could profit from his very clear analysis of the priorities of SIESC in the 25th issue of January 2000 and later the on the identity of SIESC in the 35th issue of January 2005. We also owe to him his rich contributions to the history of SIESC especially with the 34th issue *bis* of July 2004 published on occasion of the 50th SIESC meeting and number 50 of our newsletter in July 2012 where he was able to furnish complementary information to his previous study.

Finally, we are extremely thankful for the meditation he had written, as his first publication in the 2nd, bilingual at the time, edition and which was later reprinted in 11th, trilingual issue and which seems still of great relevance today.

Agnes ROSE

Meditation

«A voice calls out : In the desert, make ready the road of the Lord, straighten the paths».

Every year we hear these words spoken by Isaiah and resumed by John the Baptist. They invite us to meditate and to act in order to prepare the world to hear the word of God, in the uproar and the whirlpools of the present day, so arid and filled with cobblestones like deserts.

To make audible the word of God in the heart of the conscience of our students and our colleagues. To make audible the word of God in the life of the world. This task, assumed by Isaiah and by John, is ours too.

In our practice as teachers, especially for those working in State Education, we seldom are, directly or clearly, the bearers of the word of God. By training our students through the branches of instruction, by helping them with the growing into men and women of to-day, we must know how to live this dimension of spiritual life : to make ready the roads of the Lord, for the others and for us.

A very humble vocation, but an essential one.

Yves CALAIS

SIESC-Actuel - aktuell n° 11 - january 1993

Pax Romana

All we need isa vision of europe

The times of great changes require wider perspectives, accordingly throughout Europe visions of the past, present and the future have been questioned by different bodies and institutions. Among them also PAX ROMANA, precisely SIAEC (The International Secretariat of the Catholic Engineers, Agronomists and Industrialists) and the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia – the organizers of the International meeting in Warsaw (April 2018). Intellectuals from several European countries presented their views on various contemporary challenges. The issue of European identity and its connection with the future of our continent seems to have raised most interesting discussions and fruitful confrontations.

There were participants who, like Roza von Thun und Hohenstein, pleaded for continuing the path traced by the Founding Fathers of the European Union; for focussing on the implementation of the common space of the EU. To achieve this goal, Europeans should be able to adapt quickly to the changing reality as it seems that only such an effort can lead to the “rebuilding of old formulas”, as claimed by Giuseppe Elia. For Kevin Ahern this rewriting of the old concepts should result in the sustainability of solidarity, justice and cooperation, the milestones of the society characterizing Europe. However, the working out of adapted formulas cannot take place in “the culture of fear” as Paul Zulehner describes the present context. The Catholic priest therefore reminds us that we have a remedy against it – the Christian faith, the example of our Lord »with whom everybody can be connected«, as Zulehner claims. Besides, we can be encouraged to proper acting by the testimony of great spiritual teachers such as Roger Schutz, the founder of the Taizé Community and of all those Christians who show their commitment in everyday life. By following them, we can “contribute to the growth of humanity”.

Luckily, there are also other ways that can be taken to highlight our common need to ensure that the Europe of tomorrow is the continent of mutual respect, cooperation and peace. Lukas Mandl points to them by quoting Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, saying, “What you have inherited from your forefathers, acquire it to make it your own”. We, Europeans, seem to fully agree with the idea, otherwise this year would not have been proclaimed “The European year of cultural heritage”. The events and initiatives promoted by the EU and the Council of Europe should remind us that our cultural heritage is the repository of ideals, principles and values em-

bedded in our cultural context. These are the sources of our identity, shared by European nations, wells of empowerment that we need when facing the challenges in order not to forget who we are, where we come from and what we would like to transmit to future generations.

Darja MAZI-LESKOVAR

¹ Referring to Pax Romana ICMICA /MIIC, <https://www.icmica-miic.org/>

² <http://www.industrialheritage.eu/2018-European-Year-of-Cultural-Heritage>

NEWS FROM MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

AUSTRIA - VCL

Excerpts from a report in the VCL-NEWS on Catholic New Middle Schools (NMS)

In the area of the Archdiocese of Vienna 21 Catholic NMS are offered. In them 3911 pupils are taught this school year.

That the former "Hauptschulen", now NMS, particularly in areas of large towns, are confronted with numerous challenges because of a series of problematic developments in educational politics, is generally known. The Austrian school system is characterized by an early differentiation based on performance, which especially parents consider a measure with a promising future and characteristic. ... The differentiated school system basically serves to open to every child the individually best school career and personal growth. That's why strengthening the NMS and making aware of the possible following ways of formation with a high regard are urgently demanded by society. ...

In the following a glance is thrown at Catholic private NMS as best practice examples with the Archdiocese of Vienna as funding provider, whose organisation in campus structures (often from nurseries to colleges) offers particular advantages for young people and their families. The schools are characterised by religious, social, cultural, and language diversity, the contract of enrolment makes the attendance of denominational religious instruction and cooperation in the Christian basic principles an obligation.

One conversation group ... makes visible not only the extraordinary efforts supporting individual performance, but also the person-centred and integrated teaching, which stands out by distinctive forms of counselling and coaching, of collaboration with and by parents and value transfer. Recognizing the learners particularly in their potentials, but also in their chances of development becomes obvious in projects which convey confidence and strengthen self-esteem, in the promotion of individual talents as well as in discovering together possibilities of professions and trades and common visions of the future.

Teachers at Catholic NMS at a school campus particularly focus on successful transitions. That's why the transition from primary schools is actively paid attention to in order to guarantee well-aimed career counselling, to offer every child the form of secondary education best fitting his or her stage of development and to prevent disappointment and demotivation, but also asking too much and too much strain. Moreover, it's important to cooperate purposefully with the institutions of formation taking in the pupils, such as upper grammar schools or secondary vocational schools, which is possible at a campus without complication. Thus parents do not experience an NMS as a dead end, but as a place offering the children the necessary time and the necessary space for their development ...

One advantage of the NMS consists in taking away from the pupils that pressure to do well which often counteracts learning. The joy of learning must be maintained, is often even awakened for the first time. Promotion of talents is realized as a basic pedagogical attitude in teaching, when teachers act favouring the positive qualities and also acquire the knowhow and competence for it in special modules of school development and further education.

FRANCE- CdEP

Digital technology at school

The French school system cannot escape the questioning initiated by digital technology. This questioning concerns all of French people. At a time when our government announces the dematerialisation of income tax declarations for everyone, digital technology is debated world for

The word 'digital' covers a somewhat cloudy for the ordinary Frenchman, close to 'magical thought'.

A digital technology project was launched in 2015 to help students & teachers to use this tool & to master it better. There is an ambition to 'make school enter the digital era', with special services to get better trained, teach, accompany & follow the students' schooling. And there is also a solid financial help for schools & collectivities that commit to equipping classes & promote the idea

that this tool would improve pedagogical practices... A pedagogical revolution caused by the proper equipment !

Concretely the general use of digital technology at school is shown in schools by :

-The developing of resources & uses of digital technology at school (BNRE=Digital Bank of Educational Resources- <http://ecolenumerique.education.gouv.fr/brne/>)

-The registration in our curriculums of the development of digital technology abilities : use of tablets,keyboards,computers,collaborative writing,use of the world wide web,the understanding of digital communications rules (its risks & limitations),programming,coding & use of software programmes,the digital universe,the networks & the notion of 'being connected' ...)

-Educating people to the media & to news for a responsible use of digital technology (CLEMI :<https://www.cleml.fr>)

-The training of teachers to & by digital technology. The MAGISTERE web platform has been working since 2013,& each year training sessions are offered,sometimes in 'inter-degrees'.

We actually have to note that people are sometimes quite reticent,or at a total loss and technology often fails. Does the tool have to transform situations ?Some voices are even raised to warn about the dangers of screen viewing for young children. Let's quote Serge TISSERON's '3-6-9-12 rule (<https://sergetisseron.com/3-6-9-12/>),the researches of Doctor DUCANDA (<https://youtu.be/9-eldSE57Jw>) & Vanessa LA-LO,clinical psychologist (<https://vanessalalo.com>)

All show us the negative impacts of the intensive use of digital technology in the development of a child. What about trainings ? Learning BY Digital Technology rather than LEARNING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ? André TRICOT,researcher in cognitive psychology (https://youtu.be/lqCVrNMp_oQ) is very clear : Digital Technology is not a magical wand. It doesn't reduce training difficulties. It is but a tool among others,which can be mastered in the teachers' job execution.

Badly or little trained,having or not an interest in those practices,the teacher 's job is to progressively help his students into the digital world. François TADDEI,from CRI (Interdisciplinary Research Center ; <https://youtu.be/UT-EJMCrsQ8>),like Michel SERRES,from the French Academy (<https://academie-francaise.fr/communication-de-m-michel-serres-0>) show us the way : CREATIVITY,INNOVATION,COLLABORATION.

What if DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY showed us the way to more HUMANITY ?

Sylvie PAQUET

EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG MOBILITY

Excerpt from the article of Alfredo Mazzocchi, President UCIM Marche, in "La Scuola e l'Uomo" N. 1-2 2018

The notion of European citizenship was introduced with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

It is at the base of the key notion "European citizenship"; in fact, all the most important decisions taken by the Union in these last years are concerned with the "mobility in the Union", how to promote it and, above all, how to guarantee it in the most complete and efficient way. Being able to move freely or living in any country of EU with the portable guarantees of one's knowledge and know-how realizes a fundamental right of social welfare. With the permanent mobility exercises and defends democracy

The Euro e-Portfolio is a tool to document and publish the knowledge, skills, abilities and qualifications of each European citizen and, at the same, a tool to transfer the evaluation recognition of accreditation and certification of the knowledge, skills, abilities and qualifications of each European citizen by a system of education, training and European professional to another. This allows the maximum mutual recognition within the European Union profiles of education, training and professional (learning profile) of all, that promotes lifelong mobility all in the social, cultural, educational, training and the world of work.

The Euro e-Portfolio is a valuable European democracy tool by which each citizen can exercise one's European citizenship. It promotes and encourages the permanent mobility.

The model of Euro e-Portfolio

The Euro-Portfolio is at once the instrument and the web platform with which, in a totally free, one can publish online and keep constantly updated his profile learning. It is particularly useful to anyone who has an interest in promoting himself, highlighting their skills and their qualifications, their cultural heritage, social and professional; it is also useful to those who, especially in the world of universities and companies, have an interest in acquiring cultural profiles, social and professional candidates to teaching, research and work.

We have published a first platform for Euro e-Portfolio for experimental purposes. It has been realized in collaboration with the University of Camerino within the project EACEA UE *Observer – European Observatory for the validation of non formal and informal Skills in the sector of landscape, urban planning and risk prevention* and presented in the conference held in Sofia in November 2010. Access is free for everyone and to publish one's own portfolio it is sufficient to follow step by step the guide contained in the help on line [<http://europortfolio.europa2010-2020.eu/portal/>]

2018 at the AGRU

The main purpose of the association is to bring together lay representatives of different professions and age groups who wish to get involved in their parishes in their "eparchies" (dioceses) and become living witnesses of the evangelical message and of Christian values in their workplace and life background (at school, at university in a hospital or in their parish).

In the yearly calendar of the association there are two national highlights:

- General assembly, this year from 13th-15th April in Bucharest.

- Annual Meeting of the Executive committee which will take place in Cluj- Napoca from 11th till 13th October

Our members have also the possibility of participating in several international sessions:

- Study assembly of ELF (European Forum of national Laity Committees

- Annual SIESC Meeting

To celebrate the centenary of modern Romania this year's General Assembly was organized around the theme

"History of a Credo. Credo of an Idea."

This event was organised under the high patronage of Monseigneur Mihail FRĂȚILĂ, Greek catholic bishop of the diocese of Bucharest.

In their talks, the invited speakers, academics of Cluj-Napoca and of Bucharest emphasized the role and the contribution of the Greek –catholic church to the fulfilment of the ideal of national unity which became reality on the 1st December 1918. At the same time they insisted on the great importance of the educational offer of Greco-catholic confessional schools.

It is through this very education that, over the years, generations of lay people capable of getting engaged in political life, fighting for the respect of national dignity for the right to education, freedom and national unity. Some of them are the Fathers of Modern Romania. In 1929 the same lay people helped create our association - the AGRU.

To mark this important occasion, Monseigneur Mikhail FRĂȚILĂ, the bishop of Bucharest presented to the public two volumes of texts and photographs of the beatification process of 7 martyr bishops who paid with their lives for their fidelity to the catholic church and their opposition to the communist regime.

The site www.agru.ro contains numerous articles and reflections which complete this article.

Cecilia FRĂȚILĂ

Blessing

Blessing is a request for God's grace. It means asking God to stay in favor of us especially in the time of testing or danger. We understand the word better if we look at its opposite which is the curse. Somebody who curses calls a curse upon other people and things while blessing calls good.

The first blessing is found in the Bible already on 5th day of creation when God creates living creatures(1 Mz 1, 20). God blesses Adam and Eve wishing them to be fertile. Moreover, God blesses 7th day as the day of rest. Everything that is alive on the Earth and was created by His hands is in favor of Divine blessing.

Our ancestors called God's blessing upon everything that was precious to them. In spite of living in poverty they possessed enough life's energy and joy as they had trust and faith in God's protection. They blessed every work and lived in the conviction that God will stay merciful to each endeavor. They blessed the food to satiate them and give them strength. They blessed children entrusting them to God's protection. They put blessed wood on fire asking God to turn off the lightning. At big Christian holidays they extra blessed their homes, the cattle and food. Was this mere habit? No, it was faith. It was inner knowledge that everything does not depend on human strength but on God's power. Where there is faith, the evil has to retreat.

Even today we bless our homes at Christmas time. On Palm Sunday we take greenery to churches to be blessed, on God's Saturday we bless food. There are still Corpus Christi processions asking for the blessing of the habitat and fields. We bless cars, homes and foundation stones.

Sometimes we understand the blessing as a nice Christian custom which we took over from our ancestors. If we lose touch with the core of blessing, these customs become a habit which represent Christian ethos or even an ethnological curiosity. Blessing without faith is hollow, furthermore it is superfluous and we stop it.

Theologically speaking blessing is among sacramental which differ from sacraments. They are "holy signs"(KKC 1667). They always include prayer and signs (laying of hands, a sign of cross, sprinkling with holy water).(KKC 1668). The same as sacraments, sacramental possess God's power. Consequently, by blessing we call God's protection.

According to baptismal priesthood every Christian can bless. We bless with blessed water, salt and incense while the main priest's task is sanctifying, blessing water, salt and incense.

As to 2nd Vatican's council the Christian's role is to bless the world. According to it blessing is one of the forms of sanctification. Let's call blessing on our people, villages, work posts. Let God embraces all who we share our life with. Where there is blessing, there is less illness, less stress and less burn-out.

Let's sanctify and be salt and yeast for this world.

Branka ROŠKAR

NEWS FROM GUESTS

SPAIN

IESU COMMUNIO

IESU COMMUNIO is a Catholic, contemplative religious order, founded in Burgos (SPAIN) on 8 /12 / 2010 by Sister Veronica.

Sister Veronica entered the cloister convent of Santa Clara de Lerma when she was 18. This convent was founded in 1604. In 1990 Sister Veronica made her religious profession and in 2010 she started the new Order of IESU COMMUNIO.

At this moment this order has a large number of vocations: 186 postulants in 2011, 230 in 2014. Because of this great amount of nuns the convent of Lerma has become too small. Then they decided to form a separate community, with a differentiated charisma, and they moved to another monastery in La Aguilera, near Lerma.

The sisters of Iesu Communio dedicate themselves to the evangelization of young people and to contemplative life. They organize meetings and prayers especially for young people. Their sources of income come from preparation and sale of their products: sweets, CDs, cards, and a hostel, as well as donations.

Its motto is: *"You shine as lights in the midst of the world"* (Phil. 2, 15).

At the moment the community comprises 280 nuns. Most come from upper class families with university education. They are lawyers, economists, doctors, architects, mathematicians, engineers, etc.

This growth of vocations is difficult to explain with human arguments; so some people have called it "THE MIRACLE OF LERMA".

Many of these vocations say they felt the call to the Consecration at the World Youth Days.

In 2017 a new community was opened in Godella (Valencia), where 50 sisters moved.

Antonia QUEVEDO and Adela RODERO CARRASCO

LUXEMBOURG

News from Luxembourg

Since the end of the bank crisis of 2008, Luxembourg has got an unprecedented economic and above all demographic growth. In order to meet the challenges of a sustainable development, Jeremy Rifkin's concept of a circular economy seems to be fittest. In January 2018, the country's population has passed over 600 000 inhabitants, i.e. the double of 50 years ago. There is a yearly net increase of about 12 000 people. We have to add 200 000 workers and employees who cross the borders of the three neighboring countries, because they are paid much higher wages, and profit as taxpayers from all social benefits granted by the Luxembourg State. As housing has become terribly expensive, they don't consider moving to Luxembourg, and (im)patiently bare the strenuous daily traffic jams. On the other hand, thousands of Luxembourgers settle in the neighbor countries, as prices there are still more moderate. Even relative poverty is a recent worry.

There is less and less difference between Luxembourgers and foreigners who make 50 % of the total population and about 80 % of the active population. Refugees are relatively well received.

The multicultural reality gives the Ministry of Education a tough nut to crack. The Minister has decided to introduce both Luxembourgish and French as integration languages in the nursery schools which have been generalized in the last ten years. In primary school alphabetization is still done in German, whereas many children have got still another mother tongue. English is taught intensively in secondary school. Generally, there is a tendency towards a diversification of education.

In October 2018 general elections might bring a change in favor of the present Christian Social opposition. But the governing coalition (Socialist, liberal, green) is profiting from the good economic figures. So the outcome is difficult to foresee.

The separation between State and Church has cast the latter into a heavy crisis. The local church fabrics don't agree with the amalgamation of the church properties within one diocesan fund. Moreover the abolition of religion as a school discipline has been strongly criticized. Since 2017/18 catechism is taught within the parishes, leaving the teachers a greater freedom for the transmission of faith. The Catholic Church has to find new strategies for authentic evangelization within a secular and pluralistic society.

André GROSBUSCH

Controversial question in Sweden : Should free (non-local-authority) schools be maintained or not ?

In 2013 The Civil Service Department for Schools considered the conditions of the educational system to have become worse in Sweden during the last 15 years, with reference to pupils' results and to equality between schools. They still mean that the Swedish school system has great challenges ahead. The difference in quality between schools is increasing. This demands strong efforts nationally in order to guarantee equal education for all pupils, no matter which school they may choose. All schools must maintain a good quality and develop good methods for teaching.

The intentions of the Civil Service Department for Schools concerning the free choice of schools is that parents and children have a right to choose which school they would like to use. The effects will be more effective use of resources, pedagogic renewal, more influence from parents and pupils on the education and a higher educational quality. Quality and equality are coherent entities.

Considering this background the debate is hot in Sweden concerning free schools, and especially concerning religious free schools. Above all the socialistic parties attack free schools, considering them to increase segregation in society. They also say, that so to say "elite pupils" often go to free schools, and that these pupils mostly come from socio-economically high standard families. However, this is not true, because the school amount for each pupil follows the pupil, which makes it possible for every single family to choose whichever school they like for their child. Furthermore, statistics shows that Christian schools receive a larger number of pupils with foreign background than other schools. The debate is more about ideology than about knowledge! A high immigration from Muslim countries is a strong underlying cause for the debate. People don't want Muslim free schools, because they don't always

follow the law for Swedish schools, and because of that the politicians take the opportunity to forbid all religious free schools.

Statistics from the Swedish Civil Service Department for Schools in 2017 shows that pupils in Christian schools have better results than other pupils. 78,6 per cent of the pupils of the 9th year in Christian schools managed to totally reach the knowledge demanded. The number for all pupils in Sweden is 74,1 per cent.

There is often a long queue of waiting pupils to Christian schools. An example is the well-known L.M.Engström's Senior High School in Gothenburg which has two applicants for every seat. The Hanna School in Örebro has 600 children waiting as applicants just now. The great interest for these schools is due to their fundaments, their pedagogical work with development, the good results and the teachers' vision of giving all pupils an opportunity to succeed.

In spite of all this there is at present a clear political majority against new establishments of confessional free schools. The Swedish Minister of Education has set up a commission in March 2018 aiming at harder control of the free school authorities, and the purpose is that the rules concerning the confessional elements of education will be tightened up without breaking the rules of the European Convention, which Sweden has ratified.

If the Minister of Education succeeds it will be more difficult or totally impossible to start new free Christian schools, and existing free schools will be more carefully looked after.

UllaCarin DAHL-ROLFÖ/ Magdalena JOHNSÉN

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**