



APOSTOLIC LETTER

DRAWING NEW MAPS OF HOPE

OF POPE LEO XIV ON THE OCCASION OF THE
LX ANNIVERSARY OF THE COUNCIL DECLARATION

GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS

IT

1. Preamble

1.1 . Drawing new maps of hope. October 28, 2025, marks the 60th anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration **Gravissimum Educationis** on the extreme importance and timeliness of education in the life of the human person. With that text, the **Second Vatican Council** reminded the Church that education is not an accessory activity, but forms the very fabric of evangelization: it is the concrete way in which the Gospel becomes an educational gesture, a relationship, and a culture. Today, faced with rapid changes and disorienting uncertainties, that legacy demonstrates surprising resilience. Where educational communities allow themselves to be guided by the word of Christ, they do not retreat, but relaunch themselves; they do not erect walls, but build bridges. They react with creativity, opening up new possibilities for the transmission of knowledge and meaning in schools, universities, professional and civil training, in scholastic and youth ministry, and in research, since the Gospel does not age but makes "all things new" (Rev 21:5). Each generation hears it as a new and regenerating message. Each generation is responsible for the Gospel and for discovering its seminal and multiplying power.

1.2 . We live in a complex, fragmented, and digitalized educational environment. Precisely for this reason, it is wise to pause and refocus our gaze on the "cosmology of Christian *paideia* ": a vision that, over the centuries, has been able to renew itself and positively inspire all the multifaceted facets of education. From the very beginning, the Gospel has generated "educational constellations": experiences both humble and powerful, capable of interpreting the times, of preserving the unity between faith and reason, between thought and life, between knowledge and justice. In storms, they have been an anchor of salvation; and in calms, a sail unfurled. A lighthouse in the night to guide navigation.

1.3 . The Declaration ***Gravissimum Educationis*** has lost none of its power. From its reception, a firmament of works and charisms has emerged that still guides the journey today: schools and universities, movements and institutes, lay associations, religious congregations, and national and international networks. Together, these living bodies have consolidated a spiritual and pedagogical heritage capable of navigating the 21st century and responding to the most pressing challenges. This heritage is not rigid: it is a compass that continues to point the way and speak of the beauty of the journey. Expectations today are no less than the many that the Church faced sixty years ago. Indeed, they have expanded and become more complex. Faced with the many millions of children around the world who still lack access to primary schooling, how can we not act? Faced with the dramatic situations of educational emergency caused by wars, migration, inequality, and various forms of poverty, how can we not feel the urgency of renewing our commitment? Education – as I recalled in my Apostolic Exhortation ***Dilexi te*** – "is one of the highest expressions of Christian charity" **[1]** . The world needs this form of hope.

2. A dynamic story

2.1 . The history of Catholic education is the history of the Spirit at work. The Church is "mother and teacher" **[2]** not by supremacy, but by service: she generates faith and accompanies growth in freedom, taking on the mission of the Divine Master so that all "may have life and have it abundantly" (*Jn* 10:10). The educational styles that have followed one another show a vision of man as the image of God, called to truth and goodness, and a pluralism of methods at the service of this calling. Educational charisms are not rigid formulas: they are original responses to the needs of every age.

2.2 . In the first centuries, the Desert Fathers taught wisdom with parables and apophthegms; they rediscovered the way of the essential, of the discipline of the tongue and of the custody of the heart; they transmitted a pedagogy of the gaze that recognizes God everywhere. St. Augustine, grafting biblical wisdom onto the Greco-Roman tradition, understood that the authentic teacher arouses the desire for truth, educates freedom to read the signs and listen to the interior voice. Monasticism carried forward this tradition in the most inaccessible places, where for decades classical works were studied, commented on and taught so much so that, without this silent work at the service of culture, so many masterpieces would not have reached our days. «From the heart of the Church», then, the first universities were born, which revealed themselves from their origins to be «an incomparable centre of creativity and irradiation of knowledge for the good of humanity» [3] .In their classrooms, speculative thought found, through the mediation of the Mendicant Orders, the opportunity to solidly structure itself and push itself to the frontiers of science. Many religious congregations took their first steps in these fields of knowledge, enriching education in pedagogically innovative and socially visionary ways.

2.3 . It has expressed itself in many ways. In the *Ratio Studiorum* the richness of the scholastic tradition merges with Ignatian spirituality, adapting a program of studies that is as complex as it is interdisciplinary and open to experimentation. In seventeenth-century Rome, **Saint Joseph Calasanz** opened free schools for the poor, realizing that literacy and numeracy are dignity even before competence. In France, **Saint John Baptist de La Salle** , "realizing the injustice caused by the exclusion of the children of workers and peasants from the educational system" [4] founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, again in France, **Saint Marcellin Champagnat** dedicated himself "with all his heart, in an era in which access to education continued to be the privilege of the few, to the mission of educating and evangelizing children and young people" [5] . Similarly, **Saint John Bosco** , with his "preventive method", transformed discipline into reasonableness and proximity. Courageous women, such as **Vicenza Maria López y Vicuña** , **Francesca Cabrini** , **Giuseppina Bakhita** , Maria Montessori, **Katharine Drexel** or **Elizabeth Ann Seton** have opened up avenues for girls, migrants, the least fortunate. I reiterate what I clearly stated in *Dilexi te* : «The education of the poor, for the Christian faith, is not a favour, but a duty» [6] . This genealogy of concreteness testifies that, in the Church, pedagogy is never disembodied theory, but flesh, passion and history.

3. A living tradition

3.1 . Christian education is a choral work: no one educates alone. The educational community is an "us" where the teacher, the student, the family, the administrative and service personnel, the pastors and civil society converge to generate life [7] . This "us" prevents the water from stagnating in the swamp of "it has always been done this way" and forces it to flow, to nourish, to irrigate. The foundation remains the same: the person, image of God (Gen 1:26), capable of truth and relationship. Therefore the question of the relationship between faith and reason is not an optional chapter: "religious truth is not only a part but a condition of general knowledge" [8] . These words of **Saint John Henry Newman** —whom, in the context of this **Jubilee of World Education**, I have the great joy of **declaring co-patron of the Church's educational mission along with Saint Thomas Aquinas** —are an invitation to renew our commitment to a knowledge that is as intellectually responsible and rigorous as it is profoundly human. We must also be careful not to fall into the enlightenment of a *fides* that is exclusively at odds with *ratio* . We must emerge from the shallows by recovering an empathetic vision, open to ever better understanding how humanity understands itself today, in order to develop and deepen our teaching. Therefore, desire and heart must not be separated from knowledge: that would mean breaking the person. Catholic universities and schools are places where questions are not silenced, and doubt is not banished but supported. Heart, there, dialogues with heart, and the method is one of listening, which recognizes the other as a good, not a threat. *Cor ad cor loquitur* was the cardinal motto of **Saint John Henry Newman** taken from a letter of **Saint Francis de Sales** : "It is the sincerity of the heart, and not the abundance of words, that touches the hearts of men."

3.2 . Educating is an act of hope and a passion that is renewed because it manifests the promise we see in the future of humanity [9] . The specificity, depth and breadth of educational action is that work – as mysterious as it is real – of «making being flourish [...] is taking care of the soul» as we read in Plato 's *Apology of Socrates* (30a–b). It is a "profession of promises": time, trust, competence are promised; justice and mercy are promised, the courage of truth and the balm of consolation are promised. Educating is a task of love that is passed down from generation to generation, mending the torn fabric of relationships and restoring to words the weight of the promise: «Every man is capable of the truth, however, the journey is very bearable when one moves forward with the help of others» [10] . Truth is sought in community.

4. The compass of *Gravissimum educationis*

4.1 . The conciliar declaration **Gravissimum educationis** reaffirms everyone's right to education and identifies the family as the first school of humanity. The ecclesial community is called to support environments that integrate faith and culture, respect the dignity of all, and engage in dialogue with society. The document warns against any reduction of education to functional training or an economic tool: a person is not a "skills profile," not reduced to a predictable algorithm, but a face, a history, a vocation.

4.2 . Christian formation embraces the whole person: spiritual, intellectual, affective, social, corporeal. It does not oppose the manual and the theoretical, science and humanism, technique and conscience; instead it requires that professionalism be inhabited by an ethic, and that ethics not be an abstract word but a daily practice. Education does not measure its value only on the axis of efficiency: it measures it on dignity, on justice, on the ability to serve the common good. This integral anthropological vision must remain the cornerstone of Catholic pedagogy. It – in the wake of the thought of **St. John Henry Newman** – goes against a purely commercialistic approach that often today forces education to be measured in terms of functionality and practical utility **[11]** .

4.3 . These principles are not memories of the past. They are fixed stars. They say that the truth we seek together; that freedom is not a whim, but a response; that authority is not domination, but service. In the educational context, one must not "raise the flag of possession of the truth, neither in relation to the analysis of problems, nor in their resolution" **[12]** . Instead, "it is more important to know how to approach them, rather than giving a hasty answer as to why something happened or how to overcome it. The objective is to learn to face problems, which are always different, because every generation is new, with new challenges, new dreams, new questions" **[13]** . Catholic education has the task of rebuilding trust in a world marked by conflicts and fears, remembering that we are children and not orphans: from this awareness, fraternity is born.

5. The centrality of the person

5.1 . Putting the person at the centre means educating with Abraham's long-term vision (*Gen 15:5*): helping people discover the meaning of life, inalienable dignity, responsibility towards others. Education is not just the transmission of content, but an apprenticeship in virtue. It forms citizens capable of serving and believers capable of witnessing, freer men and women, no longer alone. And education cannot be improvised. I gladly recall the years spent in the beloved Diocese of Chiclayo, visiting the Catholic University of San Toribio de Mogrovejo, the opportunities I had to address the academic community, saying: "One is not born a professional; every university path is built step by step, book by book, year by year, sacrifice after sacrifice" **[14]** .

5.2 . The Catholic school is an environment in which faith, culture and life are intertwined. It is not simply an institution, but a living environment in which the Christian vision permeates every discipline and every interaction. Educators are called to a responsibility that goes beyond the employment contract: their testimony is as valuable as their lessons. For this reason, the training of teachers - scientific, pedagogical, cultural and spiritual - is decisive. In sharing the common educational mission, a common training path is also necessary, "initial and ongoing, capable of grasping the educational challenges of the present moment and providing more effective tools to face them [...]. This implies in educators a willingness to learn and develop knowledge, to renew and update methodologies, but also to spiritual and religious formation and sharing" **[15]** . And technical updates are not enough: it is necessary to maintain a heart that listens, a gaze that encourages, an intelligence that discerns.

5.3 . The family remains the first place of education. Catholic schools collaborate with parents, they do not replace them because "the duty of education, especially religious education, falls to them before anyone else" **[16]** . The educational alliance requires intentionality, listening and co-responsibility. It is built with processes, tools and shared assessments. It is both an effort and a blessing: when it works, it inspires trust; when it is missing, everything becomes more fragile.

6. Identity and subsidiarity

6.1 . Gravissimum educationis already recognized great importance in the principle of subsidiarity and in the fact that circumstances vary according to different local ecclesial contexts. The **Second Vatican Council**, however, articulated the right to education and its founding principles as universally valid. It highlighted the responsibilities placed both on parents themselves and on the State. It considered the provision of an education that allows students to "evaluate moral values with a good conscience" **[17]** a "sacred right" and asked civil authorities to respect this right. It also warned against the subordination of education to the job market and to the often ironclad and inhuman logic of finance.

6.2 . Christian education presents itself as a choreography. **Addressing university students** at the **World Youth Day in Lisbon** , my late predecessor **Pope Francis** said: "Be protagonists of a new choreography that puts the human person at the centre; be choreographers of the dance of life" **[18]** . Forming the "whole" person means avoiding watertight compartments. Faith, when it is true, is not added "matter", but a breath that oxygenates every other matter. Thus, Catholic education becomes leaven in the human community: it generates reciprocity, overcomes reductionism, opens to social responsibility. The task today is to dare an integral humanism that addresses the questions of our time without losing its source.

7. Contemplation of Creation

7.1 . Christian anthropology is the basis of an educational style that promotes respect, personalized guidance, discernment, and the development of all human dimensions. Among these, a spiritual inspiration is not secondary, which is realized and strengthened also through the contemplation of Creation. This aspect is not new in the Christian philosophical and theological tradition, where the study of nature also had as its purpose the demonstration of the traces of God (*vestigia Dei*) in our world. In *the Collationes in Hexaemeron* , Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio writes that "The entire world is a shadow, a path, a footprint. It is the book written from the outside (*Ez* 2:9), because in every creature there is a reflection of the divine model, but mixed with darkness. The world is, therefore, a path similar to opacity mixed with light; in this sense, it is a path. Just as you see how a ray of light that enters through a window is colored according to the different colors of the different parts of the glass, the divine ray is reflected differently in each creature and takes on different properties» **[19]** . This also applies to the plasticity of teaching calibrated on the different characters which – in any case – converge on the beauty of Creation and its protection. And educational projects require «inter- and trans-disciplinarity exercised as wisdom and creativity». **[20]**

7.2 . Forgetting our common humanity has generated divisions and violence; and when the earth suffers, the poor suffer even more. Catholic education cannot remain silent: it must unite social and environmental justice, promote moderation and sustainable lifestyles, and form consciences capable of choosing not only what is convenient but also what is right. Every small gesture—avoiding waste, choosing responsibly, defending the common good—is cultural and moral literacy.

7.3 . Ecological responsibility is not limited to technical data. They are necessary, but not sufficient. What is needed is an education that involves the mind, the heart and the hands; new habits, community styles, virtuous practices. Peace is not the absence of conflict: it is a gentle force that rejects violence. An education in peace that is "disarmed and disarming" [21] teaches us to lay down the weapons of aggressive words and judgmental gaze, in order to learn the language of mercy and reconciled justice.

8. An educational constellation

8.1 . I speak of a "constellation" because the Catholic educational world is a living and plural network: parish schools and colleges, universities and higher institutes, vocational training centers, movements, digital platforms, *service-learning* initiatives , and school, university, and cultural ministry. Each "star" has its own brightness, but together they chart a course. Where in the past there was rivalry, today we ask institutions to converge: unity is our most prophetic strength.

8.2 . Methodological and structural differences are not burdens, but resources. The plurality of charisms, if well coordinated, creates a coherent and fruitful framework. In an interconnected world, the game is played on two levels: local and global. Exchanges of teachers and students, joint projects between continents, mutual recognition of best practices, missionary and academic cooperation are needed. The future requires us to learn to collaborate more, to grow together.

8.3. The constellations reflect their lights in an infinite universe. Like a kaleidoscope, their colors intertwine, creating further chromatic variations. This is true within Catholic educational institutions, which are open to meeting and listening to civil society, political and administrative authorities, as well as representatives of the productive sectors and professional categories. They are called to collaborate even more actively with them to share and improve educational programs so that theory is supported by experience and practice. History also teaches that our institutions welcome students and families who are non-believers or of other religions, yet desire a truly human education. For this reason—as is already the case—we must continue to promote participatory educational communities, in which lay people, religious, families, and students share responsibility for the educational mission alongside public and private institutions.

9. Navigating new spaces

9.1 . Sixty years ago, ***Gravissimum Educationis*** ushered in a new era of trust: it encouraged the updating of methods and languages. Today, this trust is measured by the digital environment. Technologies must serve people, not replace them; they must enrich the learning process, not impoverish relationships and communities. A Catholic university and school without vision risk soulless efficiency, the standardization of knowledge, which then leads to spiritual impoverishment.

9.2 . To inhabit these spaces, pastoral creativity is needed: strengthening teacher training, including digital training; valorizing active teaching; promoting *service-learning* and responsible citizenship; avoiding all technophobia. Our attitude towards technology can never be hostile, because "technological progress is part of God's plan for creation" [22] . But it requires discernment in teaching planning, assessment, platforms, data protection, and equal access. In any case, no algorithm can replace what makes education human: poetry, irony, love, art, imagination, the joy of discovery, and even learning to make mistakes as an opportunity for growth.

9.3 . The crucial point is not technology, but how we use it. Artificial intelligence and digital environments must be geared toward protecting dignity, justice, and work; they must be governed by criteria of public ethics and participation; they must be accompanied by appropriate theological and philosophical reflection. Catholic universities have a crucial task: to offer a "diakonia of culture," fewer professorships and more tables where we can sit together, without unnecessary hierarchies, to touch the wounds of history and seek, in the Spirit, wisdom born from the lives of peoples.

10. The North Star of the Educational Pact

10.1 . Among the stars that guide our journey is the *Global Compact on Education* . I gratefully embrace this prophetic legacy entrusted to us by **Pope Francis** . It is an invitation to form alliances and networks to educate for universal brotherhood. Its seven paths remain our foundation: placing the person at the center; listening to children and young people; promoting the dignity and full participation of women; recognizing the family as the primary educator; opening ourselves to acceptance and inclusion; renewing the economy and politics in the service of humanity; protecting our common home. These "stars" have inspired schools, universities, and educational communities around the world, generating concrete processes of humanization.

10.2. Sixty years after ***Gravissimum Educationis*** and five years after the Pact, history challenges us with new urgency. Rapid and profound changes expose children, adolescents, and young people to unprecedented fragilities. It is not enough to conserve: we must revitalize. I ask all educational institutions to inaugurate a new era that speaks to the hearts of the new generations, reconciling knowledge and meaning, competence and responsibility, faith and life. The Pact is part of a broader Global Educational Constellation: charisms and institutions, though diverse, form a unified and luminous plan that guides our steps in the darkness of the present time.

10.3. To the seven ways, I add three priorities. The first concerns the interior life: young people demand depth; they need spaces for silence, discernment, and dialogue with their conscience and with God. The second concerns human digitalization: we educate in the wise use of technology and AI, putting the person before the algorithm and harmonizing technical, emotional, social, spiritual, and ecological intelligence. The third concerns disarming and disarming peace: we educate in nonviolent languages, reconciliation, bridges, not walls; "Blessed are the peacemakers" (*Mt* 5:9) becomes the method and content of learning.

10.4 . We are aware that the Catholic educational network has a unique capillarity. It is a constellation that reaches every continent, with a particular presence in low-income areas: a concrete promise of educational mobility and social justice **[23]** . This constellation demands quality and courage: quality in pedagogical planning, in teacher training, in governance; courage in guaranteeing access to the poorest, in supporting vulnerable families, in promoting scholarships and inclusive policies. Evangelical generosity is not rhetoric: it is a style of relationship, a method and an objective. Where access to education remains a privilege, the Church must push open the doors and invent ways, because "losing the poor" is equivalent to losing the school itself. This also applies to the university: an inclusive outlook and care for the heart save from standardization; the spirit of service reanimates the imagination and rekindles love.

11. New Maps of Hope

11.1 . On the sixtieth anniversary of ***Gravissimum Educationis*** , the Church celebrates a fruitful educational history, but also faces the imperative to update its proposals in light of the signs of the times. *Catholic educational constellations* are an inspiring image of how tradition and future can intertwine without contradiction: a living tradition that extends toward new forms of presence and service. Constellations cannot be reduced to neutral and flattened connections of diverse experiences. Instead of chains, we dare to think of constellations, of their intertwining full of wonder and awakening. In them lies the ability to navigate challenges with hope but also with courageous revision, without losing fidelity to the Gospel. We are aware of the difficulties: hyper-digitalization can shatter attention; the crisis of relationships can harm the psyche; social insecurity and inequality can extinguish desire. Yet, precisely here, Catholic education can be a beacon: not a nostalgic refuge, but a laboratory of discernment, pedagogical innovation, and prophetic witness. Drawing new maps of hope: this is the urgency of the mandate.

11.2 . I ask educational communities: disarm your words, lift your gaze, guard your heart. Disarm your words, because education does not advance through polemics, but through the meekness that listens. Lift your gaze. As God said to Abraham, "Look up at the sky and count the stars" (*Gen 15:5*): know how to ask yourselves where you are going and why. Guard your heart: the relationship comes before opinion, the person before the program. Do not waste time and opportunities: "to quote an Augustinian expression: our present is an intuition, a time that we live and which we must take advantage of before it slips out of our hands" **[24]** . In conclusion, dear brothers and sisters, I make my own the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: "You must shine like stars in the world, holding fast the word of life" (*Phil 2:15-16*).

11.3 . I entrust this journey to the Virgin Mary, *Sedes Sapientiae* , and to all the holy educators. I ask pastors, consecrated persons, lay people, institutional leaders, teachers, and students: be servants of the educational world, choreographers of hope, tireless seekers of wisdom, credible creators of expressions of beauty. Fewer labels, more stories; fewer sterile oppositions, more symphony in the Spirit. Then our constellation will not only shine, but will guide: towards the truth that sets us free (cf. *Jn* 8:32), towards the fraternity that consolidates justice (cf. *Mt* 23:8), towards the hope that does not disappoint (cf. *Rom* 5:5).

*St. Peter's Basilica, October 27, 2025,
Eve of the 60th anniversary*

LEO PP. XIV

- [1] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation ***Dilexi te*** (4 October 2025), n. 68.
- [2] Cf. JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter ***Mater et Magistra*** (15 May 1961).
- [3] JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution ***Ex corde Ecclesiae*** (15 August 1990), n. 1.
- [4] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation ***Dilexi te*** (4 October 2025), n. 69.
- [5] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation ***Dilexi te*** (4 October 2025), n. 70.
- [6] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation ***Dilexi te*** (4 October 2025), n. 72.
- [7] CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, **Instruction “ *The identity of the Catholic school for a culture of dialogue* ”** (25 January 2022), n. 32.
- [8] JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, *The Idea of University* (2005), p. 76.
- [9] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, **Instrumentum laboris *Educating today and tomorrow. A passion that is renewed*** (April 7, 2014), Introduction.
- [10] HE Mons. ROBERT F. PREVOST, OSA, *Homily at the Catholic University of Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo* (2018).

[11] See JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, *Writings on the University* (2001).

[12] LEO XIV, ***Audience with the Members of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation*** (17 May 2025).

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] HE Mons. ROBERT F. PREVOST, OSA, *Homily at the Catholic University of Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo* (2018).

[15] CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, ***Circular Letter Educating Together in Catholic Schools*** (8 September 2007), n. 20.

[16] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, ***Gaudium et spes*** (29 June 1966), n. 48.

[17] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration ***Gravissimum educationis*** (28 October 1965), n. 1.

[18] POPE FRANCIS, ***Address to university students on the occasion of World Youth Day*** (3 August 2023).

[19] SAN BONAVENTURA DA BAGNOREGIO, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, XII, in *Opera Omnia* (edited by Peltier), Vivès, Parigi, t. IX (1867), pp. 87-88.

[20] POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Constitution ***Veritatis gaudium*** (8 December 2017), n. 4c.

[21] LEO XIV, ***Greeting from the central Loggia of St. Peter's Basilica after the election*** (8 May 2025).

[22] DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH AND DICASTERY FOR CULTURE AND EDUCATION, ***Nota Antiqua et nova*** (28 January 2025), n. 117.

[23] See *Statistical Yearbook of the Church* (updated to 31 December 2022).

[24] HE Mons. ROBERT F. PREVOST, OSA, *Message to the Catholic University of Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo on the occasion of the 18th anniversary of its foundation* (2016).

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The HOLY SEE
