



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Education for all

May 2017

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right; it is essential for the achievement of all the other rights. Nevertheless, there are nearly 781 million people around the world who are unable to read. About 58 million children still remain out of school. Many youth, adult women and men go through life without learning that they need to know in order to conduct their lives with dignity and health.

Quality of education is a distant dream for many, especially for girls from poor families in rural areas. They are among the children who face the biggest barriers to access to education due to a combination of factors – such as poverty, gender inequality, geographic isolation.

Call to prayer

O Father, source of life, grant us the grace of responding to the call to fight for an education that transforms. We want to prepare the student for a dignified and qualified life. "Our teaching must educate through solidarity and exactness, for justice, solidarity and transcendence." (*Mother Theresa and Challenges of Education for South America*, February 1999, based on Letter 144, Mother Theresa). We ask this in Jesus Christ and in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Experience

Colégio Nossa Senhora de Lourdes (Our Lady of Lourdes School) is part of the School Sisters of Notre Dame network (SSND) in the Province of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is located in the wilderness of the Northeast Area of Brazil. For the past 25 years it has prepared teachers for both public and private schools. Kelly Cartaxo reports her educational path. She is among the many young girls and women who have had the opportunity to participate in this teacher formation (Magisterium) through scholarships provided by SSND.

"Education for all" is unknown in many countries, including Brazil. I began my teaching career when I decided to do a Teacher Training Course at high school in 1988. I was 15 years old and pregnant with my first daughter. Many times I wondered why I had chosen this course since my shyness was very strong. Slowly, with the help of teachers, I began to identify and find for myself my life purpose. In 1990, the School Sisters of Notre Dame arrived at Colégio Nossa Senhora de Lourdes, in Cajazeiras. From that time on, already in the last year of my course, I began to understand my vocation/mission in the way of being and doing of the SSNDs. They believed in me and I could see myself teaching with passion and feeling. I accepted all the challenges given to me and achieved great success in my apprenticeship. This led to my entrance as a teacher at Colégio Nossa Senhora de Lourdes. All the formation that I received, first as a student and then as a teacher, made me fall more in love each day with school education.

In the first years I worked as an elementary school teacher. Then I worked in early childhood education, as the coordinator of the elementary school, and in the teacher's training course at the high school. I also worked for 15 years as a teacher in the same Training Course. I am happy because this course helped me to be who I am as a woman, mother and educator. I believe that EDUCATION is the key for a better nation. Many young women coming from poor and rural areas receive scholarships to become teachers, good professionals/educators in the tradition of Mother Theresa's educational principles.

Reflection

In *You Are Sent*, General Directory 33 we read: “A particular concern in all ministries is the establishment of a just society. a) We call ourselves and others to embody gospel values and to live the social teachings of the church. Working toward the enablement of persons and the promotion of human dignity, we contribute to positive systemic change in society.”

The apostle Saint Paul encourages: “...for a person will reap only what he sows ... Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all.” (Galatians 6,7-10).

“Education is a human right. A people that is not educated, whether because of war or for whatever reasons there may be for not having an education, is a people that deteriorates, deteriorates, deteriorates, and actually falls to the level of instincts. Thus, if you want to do something, organize yourselves to help the governments, the states, to educate the youth who have no direct access to education.” ([Pope Francis, 17.09.2015](#)). “... the educational field is not limited to the conventional school. Encourage each other to seek new forms of non-conventional education in accordance with ‘the needs of the times and of people’.” ([Pope Francis to Jesuits in Italy and Albania, 07.06.2013](#))

Action

- Dialogue about your convictions regarding the ministry of education: How can we be more engaged in the promotion of an “education for all” today?
- Keep in mind that “Education does not transform the world, but it changes people. People transform the world.” With which people, institutions, movements and Non-Governmental Organizations (NOG) can we establish partnerships in order to strengthen the education of people and do the necessary transformation in the reality where we live? [Paulo Freire](#) (1921-1997) *Brazilian educator and philosopher*
- Watch the video “[Aprender a aprender](#)” (Learn to learn). It is an animation with no words.

Closing Prayer: Litany of education

God of life and compassion, give us the wisdom that emerges from your Trinitarian love and make us educators in all that we are and do *because Love cannot wait.*

Through education, we help people develop to the fullness of their potential *because we believe that Love cannot wait.*

We hold in common the gift of teaching and openness to a desire for learning *because Love cannot wait.*

Mother Theresa, woman of faith and bold in her mission to educate, teach us to see and commit ourselves to respond to the needs of our world *because Love cannot wait.*

All of this we ask in the name of Jesus and in unity with the Holy Spirit. Amen.