

'Abandon Workshops of Death'

Do Not Engage in Research Leading to War, Pope Tells Pontifical Academy of Science

Vatican City (NC) -- Scientists should "abandon the laboratories and workshops of death" by not engaging in research leading to "war, tyranny and terror," said Pope John Paul II Nov. 12.

The pope asked scientists to work instead in "laboratories of life" that help build peace and improve living conditions. The papal plea to "disarm science" came in a speech to the Pontifical Academy of Science. The audience included 15 Nobel Prize winners.

Work to see that "the discoveries of science are not placed at the service of war, tyranny, and terror," the pope said.

"While it is inevitable that certain research will be used for aims of aggression, the scientist ought to choose a field that contributes to the good of mankind, to the building of peace," he added.

"By refusing certain fields of research, inevitably destined, in the concrete historical circumstances, for deadly purposes, the scientists of the whole world ought to be united in a common readiness to disarm science and to form a providential force for peace," said the pope, who has often called for disarmament agreements by the nuclear powers.

"Prophets of disarmament have been objects of derision in every age, especially on the part of shrewd politicians, the supporters of power," he said. "But today must not our civilization recognize that humanity has need for them?"

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The pope did not specifically mention nuclear arms, but he warned that contemporary man is living in "a grave moment in history" when all of humanity is threatened with death.

"Faced with this great patient in danger of death which is humanity, scientists, in collaboration with all other members of the world of culture and with the social institutions must carry out the work of salvation analogous to that of the doctor who has sworn to use all his powers to heal the sick," the pope said.

The pontiff asked "for the success of the only war that must be fought: the war against hunger, disease and the death of millions of human beings whose quality and dignity of life could be helped and promoted with 7 percent of the amount

spent each year for the incessant and threatening rearmament of the richest nations."

The pope asked scientists to help in the process of building peace by directing their research toward "the promotion of justice" and by resisting efforts "to exploit your research and discoveries against justice and peace."

"The scientific community, a community of peace, must be extended to all nations, through the foundation everywhere of institutes for research and sound technological application," he said.

"It is not enough that political colonialism has ceased; every form of scientific and technological colonialism must cease as well," the pope added.

The speech was part of the pope's continuing effort to engage scientists in efforts to reduce the arms race. In 1981 the pope asked the Pontifical Academy of Sciences to prepare a study on the effects of nuclear war on the world's population.

The study argued for nuclear disarmament.

"The conditions of life following a nuclear attack would be so severe that the only hope for humanity is prevention of any form of nuclear war," the study said.

In December 1981 the pope sent a delegation of scientists to present the study to world leaders, including U.S. President Ronald Reagan and the then Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev.

Pope Lauds U.S. Catholic Schools and Teaching Nuns

Dear brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Once again I am very happy to share an intense experience of ecclesial communion with another group of American bishops. You come from different regions of the United States and the pastoral situations of your individual local Churches vary greatly. And yet I am sure that in all your dioceses there is a deep common interest in the topic that I would like to touch on today: Catholic education.



The very notion of Catholic education is closely related to the essential mission of the Church, to communicate Christ. It is linked to our own episcopal mandate to teach — to teach everything that Jesus commanded to be taught (cf. Mt. 28:20). And as teachers, we are called to bear witness by word and example to the Christ whom the Church is endeavoring to communicate. Simply put, the aim of Catholic education is to help people "to arrive at the fullness of Christian life" (Can. 794:1). It is identified with the great ideal of St. Paul who is not satisfied "until Christ is formed" (Gal. 4:19) in the Galatians; he yearns to see this process completed.

The Second Vatican Council presented the aim of all Christian education in various aspects, which include "ensuring that the baptized...may grow ever more conscious of the gift of faith which they have received; that they may learn to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth (cf. Jn. 4:23), especially through liturgical worship; and that they may be prepared to lead their personal lives according to a new nature, in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24); so that they may reach perfect maturity...and make their contribution to the increase of the mystical body" ("Gravissimum Educationis," 2).

These are elements with far-reaching implications; they take into account the fact that Catholic education is indeed concerned with the whole person, with his or her eternal destiny and with the common good of society, which the Church herself strives to promote. In practice this requires that the physical, moral and intellectual talents of children and young people should be cared for, so that they may attain a sense of responsibility and the right use of freedom and take an active part in the life of society (cf. Can. 795).

All of these elements have been promoted by Catholic education in your country; indeed, Catholic education constitutes a privileged chapter in the history of the Church in America. Catholic education has been a very effective dimension of evangelization, bringing the Gospel to bear on all facets of life. It has involved different individuals and groups in the educational process, and it has succeeded in making generations of people feel part of the ecclesial and social community. Despite limitations and imperfections, Catholic education in America can, under God's grace, be credited to a high degree with forming the splendid Catholic laity of America. Catholic education was itself the foundation for understanding and accepting the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which was a consistent explication and development of principles that the Church has held and taught throughout the centuries. The blessings of the council were effectively brought to bear on the lives of many because years of generous Catholic education had prepared the way.

Catholic education in your land has also fostered numerous vocations over the years. You yourselves owe a great debt of gratitude to that Catholic education which enabled you to understand and to accept the call of the Lord. Among other contributions of Catholic education is the quality of citizens that you were able to produce: upright men and women that contributed to the well-being of America, and through Christian charity worked to serve

all their brothers and sisters. Catholic education has furnished an excellent witness to the Church's perennial commitment to culture of every kind. It has exercised a prophetic role — perhaps modestly in individual cases, but overall most effectively — to assist faith to permeate culture. The achievements of Catholic education in America merit our great respect and admiration.

There is still, however, a debt of gratitude to be paid, before the witness of history, to the parents who have supported a whole system of Catholic education; to the parishes that have coordinated and sustained these efforts; to the dioceses that have promoted programs of education and supplemented means of support, especially in poor areas; to the teachers — who always included a certain number of generous lay men and women — who through dedication and sacrifice championed the cause of helping young people to reach maturity in Christ. But above all gratitude is due to the Religious for their contribution to Catholic education. In writing last Easter to the bishops of the United States about religious life, I stated: "Religious were among your pioneers. They blazed a trail in Catholic education at all levels, helping to create a magnificent educational system from elementary school to university" (letter of April 3, 1983, no. 2).

To women Religious is due a very special debt of gratitude for their particular contribution to the field of education. Their authentic educational apostolate was, and is, worthy of the greatest praise. It is an apostolate that requires much self-sacrifice; it is thoroughly human as an expression of religious service: an apostolate that follows closely human and spiritual growth, and accompanies children and young people patiently and lovingly through the problems of youth and the insecurity of adolescence toward Christian maturity. How many married couples of your generation could — and did — point to women Religious who influenced their lives and helped them to reach that stage of personal development in which their vocation to married love and parenthood could be realized? And how many priests, brothers and sisters found edification in the witness of sacrificial love exemplified in religious life, and the encouragement necessary for them to embark on the preparation for their own vocation?

Major factors in the Catholic education about which we have been speaking include: the Catholic teacher, Catholic doctrine and the Catholic school.

While the entire mission of Catholic education is essentially linked to the Church's life of faith and as such forms part of the bishop's ministry, the first educators of individual children are the parents. In the new Code of Canon Law the whole treatment of education begins with the word "parents." In the eyes of the Church, and before God, their obligations and rights are unique, as are the sustaining graces they receive in the sacrament of marriage. It is this sacrament that "gives to the educational role the dignity and vocation of being really and truly a 'ministry' of the Church" ("Familiaris Consortio," 38). But all Catholic teachers are invested with great dignity and are called to be "outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life" (Can. 803:2). The whole structural system of Catholic education will have value to the extent that the formation and education given by the teachers conform to the principles of Catholic doctrine.

In religious education there is a new urgency to explain Catholic doctrine. Many young people of today look to Catholic educators, rightly saying: "You do not have to convince us; just explain well." And we know that, in whatever forum God's word is communicated, it has power to illuminate minds and to touch hearts: "Indeed, God's word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12).

In the history of your country an extremely effective instrument of Catholic education has been the Catholic school. It has contributed immensely to the spreading of God's word and has enabled the faithful "to relate human

affairs and activities with religious values in a single living synthesis" ("Sapientia Christiana," 1). In the community formed by the Catholic school, the power of the Gospel has been brought to bear on thought patterns, standards of judgment and norms of behavior. As an institution the Catholic school has to be judged extremely favorably if we apply the sound criterion: "You will know them by their deeds" (Mt. 7:16), and again, "You can tell a tree by its fruit" (Mt. 7:20). It is easy therefore in the cultural environment of the United States to explain the wise exhortation contained in the new code: "The faithful are to promote Catholic schools, doing everything possible to help in establishing and maintaining them" (Can. 800:2).

Your Catholic school system has long enjoyed the esteem of the Holy See. Pius XII at the very beginning of his pontificate wrote to the American bishops of that time, saying: "It is with good reason then that visitors from other lands admire the organization and system under which your schools of various levels are conducted" ("Sertum Laetitiae," 8: Nov. 1, 1939). Years later, Paul VI, in canonizing Mother Seton, felt the need to praise the providence of God who raised up this woman to inaugurate in your country the work of the Catholic school (cf. Address to American bishops, Sept. 15, 1975). And two years later, in canonizing John Neumann, Paul VI spoke of the "relentless energy" with which he promoted the Catholic school system in the United States (address of June 19, 1977).

At every level of Catholic education the importance of the Catholic teacher and of Catholic doctrine is felt. At every level, up to and including the university level, there is the need for an institutional commitment of the Catholic school to the word of God as proclaimed by the Catholic Church. And this institutional commitment is an expression of the Catholic identity of each Catholic school.

The pastoral leadership of the bishop is pivotal in lending support and guidance to the whole cause of Catholic education. It is up to the bishop, together with his priests, to encourage all Catholic educators to be inspired by the great ideal of communicating Christ. Only the bishop can set the tone, ensure the priority and effectively present the importance of the cause to the Catholic people.

At the same time, the bishop's zeal finds an endless challenge in providing pastoral care for students, realizing the special spiritual needs of students engaged in higher studies, inside and outside Catholic institutions, whose progress is very closely linked to the future of society and of the Church herself (cf. "Gravissimum Educationis," 10).

A particular dimension of Catholic education, which is at the same time a stage of evangelization, is the question of catechesis as it relates to Catholic institutions, as it is performed outside of Catholic schools, and as it is exercised directly by parents. From every viewpoint, catechesis involves "educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and message of our Lord Jesus Christ" ("Catechesi Tradendae," 19). Especially under this catechetical aspect of imparting Catholic doctrine in an organic and systematic way, the Catholic school remains a truly relevant instrument at the service of faith, assisting the young to enter into the mystery of Christ. For this reason and for the other reasons already given, I renew that prophetic appeal of Paul VI to the American bishops: "Brethren, we know the difficulties involved in preserving Catholic schools, and the uncertainties of the future. And yet we rely on the help of God and on your own zealous collaboration and untiring efforts, so that the Catholic schools can continue, despite grave obstacles, to fulfill their providential role at the service of genuine Catholic education, and at the service of your country" (address of Sept. 15, 1975).