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Apostolic Letter

DRAWING NEW MAPS OF HOPE

**of Pope Leo XIV on the occasion
of the 60th Anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration
*Gravissimum educationis***

1. Preamble

1.1. Drawing new maps of hope. 28 October 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum educationis*, on the extreme importance and current relevance of education in human life. With that text, the Second Vatican Council reminded the Church that education is not an ancillary activity, but forms the very fabric of evangelization: it is the concrete way in which the Gospel becomes an educational gesture, a relationship, a culture. Today, in the face of rapid change and disorienting uncertainties, that legacy is showing surprising resilience. **Where educational communities allow themselves to be guided by the word of Christ, they do not retreat,** but are revitalized; they do not build walls, but bridges. They respond with creativity, opening up new possibilities for the transmission of knowledge and meaning in schools, universities, professional and civic training, school and youth ministry, and research, because the Gospel does not grow old but makes "all things new" (Rev 21:5). Each generation hears it as a regenerating novelty. Each generation is responsible for the Gospel and for discovering its seminal and multiplying power.

1.2. We live in a complex, fragmented, digitized 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 aspects of education. Since its origins, the Gospel has generated “educational constellations”: experiences that are 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 stormy weather, they have been a lifeline; in calm weather, they have been a sail unfurled. A beacon in the night to guide navigation.

1.3. The Declaration *Gravissimum educationis* has lost none of its potency. Since its reception, it has given rise to a constellation of works and charisms that still guide the way 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 traversing the twenty-first century and responding to the most pressing challenges. This heritage is not set in stone: it is a compass that continues to point the way and speak of the beauty of the journey. Expectations today are no less than those 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 do not have access to primary education, how can we fail to act? Confronted with the dramatic educational emergencies caused by wars, migration, inequalities and various forms of poverty, how can we not feel the urgency to renew 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 history

2.1. The Church is “mother and teacher” [2] not by supremacy, but through service: she accompanies the growth of freedom, taking on the mission of the Divine Master so that everyone “may have life, and have it abundantly” (*Jn* 10:10). The educational styles that have succeeded one another show a vision of man as the image of God, called to truth and goodness, and a multiplicity of methods at the service of this calling. Educational charisms are not rigid formulas: they are original responses to the needs of each era.

2.2. In the early centuries, the desert Fathers taught wisdom through parables and apophthegms; they rediscovered the path to the essential, to discipline of speech and guardianship of the heart; they transmitted a pedagogy of the gaze that recognizes God everywhere. Saint 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 inner voice. Monasticism perpetuated this tradition in the most inaccessible places, where for decades the classical works were studied, commented on and taught, so much so that without this silent work in the service of culture, many masterpieces would not have survived to the present day. Then, “from the heart of the Church”, the first universities were born, which from their origins proved to be “an incomparable centre of creativity and dissemination of knowledge for the good of humanity” [3]. In their halls, speculative thought found, through the mediation of the Mendicant Orders, the possibility of structuring itself solidly and pushing itself to the frontiers of science. Many religious congregations took their first steps in these fields of knowledge, enriching education in a pedagogically innovative and socially visionary way.

2.3. It has expressed itself in many ways. In the *Ratio Studiorum*, the richness of the scholastic tradition blends with Ignatian spirituality, adapting a curriculum that is as articulated as it is interdisciplinary and open to experimentation. In seventeenth-century Rome, Saint Joseph Calasanz opened free schools for the poor, sensing that literacy and numeracy are a matter of dignity even before they are a matter of competence. In France, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, “realizing the injustice caused by the exclusion of the children of workers and ordinary people 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 “wholeheartedly to the mission of educating and evangelizing children and young people, especially those most in need, during a period when access to education continued to be the privilege of a few” [5]. Similarly, Saint John Bosco, with his “preventive method”, transformed discipline into reasonableness and closeness. Courageous women such as Vicenta María López y Vicuña, Francesca Cabrini, Josephine Bakhita, Maria Montessori, Katharine Drexel and Elizabeth Ann Seton opened doors for girls, migrants and the marginalized. I reiterate what I clearly stated in *Dilexi te*: “For the Christian faith, the education of the poor is not a favour but a duty” [6]. This genealogy of practical action 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 collective endeavour: no one educates alone. The educational community is a “we” where teachers, students, families, administrative and service staff, pastors and civil society converge to generate life [7]. This “we” prevents 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 portion, but a condition of general knowledge” [8]. These words of Saint John Henry Newman – whom, in the context of this Jubilee of the World of Education, I have the great joy of declaring co-patron of the Church’s educational mission together with Saint Thomas Aquinas – are an invitation to renew our commitment to knowledge that is as intellectually responsible and rigorous as it is deeply human. We must also be careful not to fall into the trap of an enlightenment of a *fides* paired exclusively with *ratio*. We need to emerge from the shallows by recovering an empathic and open vision, and to understand better how humankind understands itself today in order to develop and deepen our teaching. This is why desire and the heart must not be separated from knowledge: it would mean splitting the person. Catholic universities and schools are places where questions are not silenced, and doubt is not banished, but accompanied. The heart, there, dialogue with the heart, and the method is that of listening that recognizes the other as an asset, not a threat. *Cor ad cor loquitur* was Saint John Henry Newman’s cardinal’s motto, taken from a letter of Saint Francis de Sales: “Sincerity of heart, not abundance of words, 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 the work – as mysterious as it is real – of “making the 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”: it promises time, confidence, skill; it promises justice and mercy, it promises the courage of the truth and the balm of consolation. Educating is a labour of love that is handed down from generation to generation, mending the torn fabric of relations and restoring the weight of promise to words: “Every man is capable of truth, yet the journey is much more bearable when one goes forward with the help of another” [10]. Truth is sought in community.

4. The compass of *Gravissimum educationis*

4.1. The Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum educationis* reaffirms the right of every person to education, and indicates the family as the first school of humanity. The ecclesial community is called upon to support environments that integrate faith and culture, respect the dignity of all, and engage in dialogue with society. The document warns against reducing education to functional training or an economic tool: a person is not a “skills profile”, cannot be reduced to a predictable algorithm, but is a face, a story, a vocation.

4.2. Christian formation embraces the entire person: spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, physical. It does not pit manual and theoretical skills, science and humanism, technology and conscience against each other; rather, it demands that professionalism be imbued with ethics, and that ethics be not an abstract concept but a daily practice. Education does not measure its value only on the axis of efficiency: it measures it according to dignity, justice, the capacity to serve the common good. This integral anthropological vision must remain the cornerstone of Catholic pedagogy. Following in the wake of the thought of *Saint John Henry Newman*, it goes against a strictly mercantilist approach that often forces education today to be measured in terms of functionality and practical utility [11].

4.3. These principles are not memories from the past. They are guiding stars. They say that the truth is sought together; that freedom is not a whim, but an answer; that authority is not domination, but service. In the educational context, one must never “claim to possess a monopoly on truth, either in its analysis of problems or its proposal of concrete solutions” [12]. Instead, “knowing best how to approach them is more important than providing immediate responses to why things happen or how to deal with them. The aim is to learn how to confront problems, for these are always different, since every generation is new, and faces new challenges, dreams and questions” [13]. Catholic education has the task of rebuilding trust in a world riven with conflicts and fears, remembering that we are sons and daughters, not orphans; fraternity is born of this awareness.

5. The centrality of the person

5.1. Putting the person at the centre means educating them to see with the far-sightedness of Abraham (*Gen 15:5*): helping them discover the meaning of life, their inalienable dignity and their responsibility towards others. Education is not only the transmission of content, but also the learning of virtues. It forms citizens capable of serving and believers capable of witnessing, men and women who are freer, no longer alone. And formation cannot be improvised. I fondly remember the years I 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: "We are not born professionals; every university itinerary 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 intertwine. It is not simply an institution, but rather a living environment in which the Christian vision permeates every discipline and every interaction. Educators are called to a responsibility that goes beyond the work contract: their witness has the same value as their lessons. For this reason, the formation of teachers – scientific, pedagogic, cultural and spiritual – is decisive. Sharing the common educational mission also demands a path of common formation, "an initial and permanent project of formation that is able to grasp the educational challenges of the present time and to provide the most effective tools for dealing with them... This implies that educators must be willing to learn and develop knowledge and be open to the renewal and updating of methodologies, but open also to spiritual and religious formation and sharing" [15]. Technical updates are not enough: it is necessary to cultivate a heart that listens, a gaze that encourages, and an intelligence that discerns.

5.3. **The family remains the first place of education.** Catholic schools collaborate with parents; they do not substitute them, because the "duty ... devolves primarily on them" [16]. The educational alliance requires intentionality, listening and co-responsibility. It is built with processes, tools, shared assessments. It is both hard work and a blessing: when it works, it inspires trust; when it fails, everything becomes more fragile.

6. Identity and subsidiarity

6.1. *Gravissimum educationis* already accorded great importance to the principle of **subsidiarity** and the fact that circumstances vary according to different local ecclesial contexts. However, the *Second Vatican Council* articulated the right to education and its founding principles as universally valid. It highlighted the responsibilities placed on both parents and the state. It considered the provision of an education that enables students to “evaluate moral values with a right conscience” [17] to be a “sacred right” and called on civil authorities to respect this right. It also warned against subordinating education to the labour market and to the often harsh and inhuman logic of finance.

6.2. Christian education resembles a choreography. My late Predecessor *Pope Francis* said: “work to bring about a new ‘choreography’, one that respects the ‘dance’ of life by putting the human person at the centre”. [18] To form the “whole” person means avoiding compartmentalization. When it is true, faith is not an added “subject,” but a breath that oxygenates every other subject. Thus, **Catholic education becomes leaven in the human community:** it generates reciprocity, overcomes reductionism, and opens up to social responsibility. The task today is to dare to pursue an integral humanism that addresses the questions of our time without losing sight of its source.

7. The contemplation of Creation

7.1. Christian anthropology is the basis of an educational style that promotes respect, personalized accompaniment, discernment and the development of all the human dimensions. Among these, spiritual afflatus is not secondary, and it is fulfilled and strengthened also through the contemplation of Creation. This aspect is not new in the Christian philosophical and theological tradition, in which the study of nature also had the purpose of demonstrating 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 pathway, an imprint. It is a book written from 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 entering through a window is coloured according to the different colours of the different parts of the glass, the divine ray is reflected differently in each creature and takes on different properties” [19]. This applies also in the plasticity of teaching tailored to different characters which, in any case, converge on the beauty of Creation and its preservation. It requires educational projects that are “inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary ... carried out with wisdom and creativity” [20].

7.2. Forgetting our common humanity has given rise to divisions and violence; and when the earth suffers, the poor suffer the most. Catholic education cannot be silent: it must combine social justice and environmental justice, promote sobriety and sustainable lifestyles, and form consciences capable of choosing not merely what is convenient, but what is just. Every small gesture – avoiding waste, choosing responsibly, defending the common good – constitutes cultural and moral literacy.

7.3. Ecological responsibility is not limited to technical data. These are necessary, but they are not enough. There is a need for 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 the gentle strength that rejects violence. An education in “unarmed and disarming” [21] peace teaches us to set down the weapons of the aggressive word and the judgmental look, in order to learn the language of mercy and reconciled justice.

8. An educational constellation

8.1. I speak of a “constellation”, because the world of Catholic education is a living and pluralistic network: parish schools and colleges, universities and institutes of higher education, professional training centres, movements, digital platforms, service-learning initiatives and school, university and cultural pastoral programmes. Each “star” has its own brightness, but together they chart a course. Where in the past there was rivalry, now we ask the institutions to converge: unity is our most prophetic strength.

8.2. Methodological and structural differences are not burdens, but resources. The multiplicity of charisms, if well-coordinated, composes a coherent and fruitful picture. In an interconnected world, the game is played on two boards: local and global. There is a need for exchanges of teachers and students, joint projects across continents, mutual recognition of good practices, and missionary and academic cooperation. The future demands that we learn to collaborate more and to grow together.

8.3. Constellations reflect their own light in an infinite universe. As in a kaleidoscope, their colours intermingle, creating further chromatic variations. This is what happens in 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 required to collaborate even more actively with them in order to share and improve educational pathways so that the theory may be supported by experience and practice. History also teaches that our institutions welcome students and families who do not believe or who profess other faiths, but who 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, together with public and private institutions.

9. Navigating new spaces

9.1. Sixty years ago, *Gravissimum educationis* heralded a season of trust: it encouraged the updating of methods and languages. Today this trust is being tested by the digital environment. Technologies must serve, not replace, the person; they must enrich the learning process, not impoverish relationships and communities. A university and a Catholic school without vision risks soulless efficiency, the standardization of knowledge, which then becomes spiritual impoverishment.

9.2. Pastoral creativity is needed in order to inhabit these spaces: strengthening the formation of teachers, including in the digital sphere; enhancing active teaching; promoting service-learning and responsible citizenship; and avoiding any 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 didactic planning, evaluation, platforms, data protection, and equitable access. In any case, no algorithm can substitute what makes education human: poetry, irony, love, art, imagination, the joy of discovery and even learning from mistakes as an opportunity for growth.

9.3. The decisive point is not technology, but the use we make of it. Artificial intelligence and digital environments must be oriented towards the protection of dignity, justice and work; they must be governed according to criteria of public ethics and participation; they must be accompanied by adequate theological and philosophical reflection. Catholic universities have a decisive task: to offer a “diakonia of culture”, fewer chair professorships and more tables to sit around together, without unnecessary hierarchies, to touch the wounds of history and seek, in the Spirit, the wisdom that springs from the lives of peoples.

10. The lodestar of the Compact on Education

10.1. Among the stars that guide our path is the Global Compact on Education. I gratefully accept this prophetic legacy entrusted to us by Pope Francis. It is an invitation to form an alliance and networks to educate in universal fraternity. Its seven pathways remain our foundation: putting the person at the centre; listening to children and young people; promoting the dignity and full participation of women; recognizing the family as the first educator; opening ourselves to welcome and inclusion; renewing the economy and politics in the service of humanity; and caring for our common home. These “stars” have inspired schools, universities and educational communities around the world, giving rise to concrete processes of humanization.

10.2. Sixty years after *Gravissimum educationis* and five years after the Compact, history calls to us with fresh urgency. Rapid and deep changes expose children, teenagers and young people to unprecedented fragility. It is not enough to conserve it: it must be relaunched. I ask all the educational bodies to inaugurate a season that speaks to the heart of the new generations, reconstituting knowledge and meaning, competence and responsibility, faith and life. The Compact is part of a broader Global Educational Constellation: charisms and institutions, though diverse, form a unified and luminous design that guides our steps in the darkness of the present time.

10.3. To the seven paths, I would add three priorities. The first regards the inner life. Young people ask for depth; they need spaces for silence, discernment, and dialogue with their conscience and with God. The second regards the digital human: let us educate in a judicious use of technology and of AI, placing the person before the algorithm and harmonizing technical, emotional, social, spiritual and ecological intelligence. The third regards unarmed and disarming peace: let us educate in non-violent languages, reconciliation, bridges and 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 reach. It is a constellation that spans 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, teacher training and governance; courage in ensuring access for the poorest, in supporting fragile families, in promoting scholarships and inclusive policies. Evangelical gratuitousness 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 to open doors and invent new paths, because "losing the poor" is equivalent to losing the school itself. This also applies to universities: an inclusive outlook and attention to the heart save us from standardization; a spirit of service revives 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 of updating her offerings 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 towards new forms of presence and service. Constellations are not reduced to neutral and inert concatenations of different experiences. Instead of chains, let us dare to think of constellations, 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 fragment attention; the crisis of relationships can wound the psyche; social insecurity and inequalities 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 words, raise your eyes, and safeguard the heart. Disarm words, because education does not advance with polemics, but with meekness that knows how to listen. Raise your eyes. As God said to Abraham, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars" (*Gen 15:5*): know how to ask yourselves where you are going, and why. Safeguard the heart: relationships come before opinions, people before programmes. Do not waste time and opportunities: "to quote an Augustinian expression: our present is an intuition; a time we live and must take advantage of before it slips through our fingers" [24]. In conclusion, dear brothers and sisters, I make my own the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: you must "shine as lights 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 sainted educators. I appeal to Pastors, consecrated men and women, laypeople, those responsible for institutions, teachers and students: be servants of the world of education, choreographers of hope, tireless seekers of wisdom, credible creators of expressions of beauty. Fewer labels, more stories; fewer sterile contrasts, more harmony in the Spirit. Then our constellation will not only shine, but it will also guide us: 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).

Saint Peter's Basilica, 27 October 2025

Eve of the 60th Anniversary

LEO PP. XIV

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 28 October 2025

[1] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te* (4 October 2025), no. 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), no. 1.

[4] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te* (4 October 2025), no. 69.

[5] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te* (4 October 2025), no. 70.

[6] LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te* (4 October 2025), no. 72.

[7] CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Instruction " *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*" (25 January 2022), no. 32.

[8] JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University* (2005), p. 76.

[9] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Instrumentum laboris *Educating today and tomorrow: A renewing passion* (7 April 2014), Introduction.

[10] BISHOP ROBERT F. BREYER, O.S.A., Member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, in: *The*

[10] BISHOP ROBERT F. PREVOST, O.S.A., *Homily at the Cattedrale Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo* (2018).

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

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

[13] *Ivi.*

[14] BISHOP ROBERT F. PREVOST, O.S.A., *Homily at Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo Catholic University* (December 2016).

[15] CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Circular Letter *Educating Together in Catholic Schools* (8 September 2007), no. 20.

[16] VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Contemporary World, *Gaudium et spes* (29 June 1966), no. 48.

[17] VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, *Declaration Gravissimum educationis* (28 October 1965), no. 1.

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

[19] SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, XII, in *Opera Omnia* (edited by Peltier), Vivès, Paris, t. IX (1867), pp. 87-88.

[20] POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium* (8 December 2017), no. 4c.

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

[22] DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH AND DICASTERY FOR CULTURE AND EDUCATION, Note *Antiqua et nova* (28 January 2025), no. 117.

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

[24] BISHOP ROBERT F. PREVOST, O.S.A., Message to Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo Catholic University on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of its founding (2016).

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