

TEACHING CATHOLIC RELIGION:

ACKNOWLEDGING TRANSFORMATIONS WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE MISSION

I have been teaching Catholic religion in junior high school since 1985. Teaching this discipline is not a simple profession for me, but something bigger, I would say a vocation, a mission. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to offer my service to many students, to collaborate with many colleagues and to witness the succession of various changes within the scholastic universe. Lots of news, even when it comes to IRC (catholic religion teaching) time. Reporting them all would be a difficult task, so I'll just mention some.

An important step occurred with the revision of the Concordat of 1929 in February 1984: this led to the passage from the time of "Confessional" Catholic Religion to the time of "cultural" Catholic Religion (art.9.2). This passage also introduced the faculty to use this teaching or to opt for alternative subjects, always in line with the educational objectives of the school. Therefore, even the IRC, based on these indications, could make its specific contribution to the achievement of the educational objectives proper of the school that trains the men of "tomorrow", with qualified teachers, new programs (Presidential Decree 751 of 16/12 / 1985) and textbooks.

With the Presidential Decree 175 of 20/08/2012 it was established that Catholic teachers should possess diplomas of professional qualification: academic title (baccalaureate, license or doctorate) in theology or other ecclesiastical disciplines, conferred by a faculty approved by the Holy See, etc. The

law 186 of 18/7/2003 has foreseen the entry into the role, through state exam, making the teacher "organically included in the school roles..." (6/3/2007). The IRC teacher, like other teachers, can determine the admission and non-admission of students who use this teaching in the scrutiny (DL 16/4/1994, art.309.3).

The new programs of 2012 are also interesting. One of the latest news, wanted by the Ministry of Education, establishes the presence of teachers of religion, for the first time, at state exams in secondary junior high schools. However, it is the duty of the local Bishop to ensure that the teachers of religion are excellent in terms of correct doctrine, witness of Christian life and pedagogical ability (can 804 § 2).

National indications, textbooks, but above all my experience of Christian and Catholic faith, have helped and still help me to overcome the difficulties, to involve the boys, to let them become aware of themselves, of faith, of the meaning of life, culture and the world. In all these years, helping pupils to reflect, to question themselves on meaningful topics and to find answers, loving and listening to them, was natural for me. I turn my attention and my care to every young person: to the good and diligent guys that grant satisfaction in their studies and commitment, but also to the most problematic boys that stimulate me to go further and further in my mission.

To the new teachers that are going to succeed, I can only advise to live what they teach and to transmit the positive values of our faith with great passion. Furthermore, we must trust the young people assigned to us by collaborating with their families. Even if we are immersed, by now, in a multi-religious and multi-cultural world, to new generations I suggest not to be afraid of choosing IRC, because such teaching can help to better understand one's own faith; it fosters the search for truth and constructive dialogue with people of different religions.

Prof. Concetta Silipo



Where do these things come to them from?

The inhabitants of Nazareth have forgotten that the Word of God and the history of God with his people are one. The Word says what to do and what not to do. History instead tells us what God did and how he did it. It reveals to us that the whole history of the sons of Abraham was his perennial and uninterrupted creation. If the Lord had stopped creating them even for one day, they would not be and would not even exist. While God worked for them to be, they acted to destroy themselves, to return to their non-being, non life and slavery. Abraham, as well as also Isaac and Jacob are the work of God. Joseph is the work of God. Moses was made what he was by the Lord. The same can be said of Joshua, the Judges and the Prophets. Nothing has ever happened in the Lord's people that was not his particular, unique and unrepeatable creation. No instrument of his ever made himself alone or was made by his family. Not even Solomon was great by inheritance. It is by the gift of the Almighty that he was made wise beyond measure. Then Solomon did not obey God and lost all wisdom.

David was the King who gave glory to God and to the people. But who was David before? A very humble shepherd of sheep who spent all his time with his flock. His father had not even invited him so that he presented himself before Samuel. Now, right this humble shepherd of flock the Lord has chosen to be elevated to the highest dignity of king of his people. The Lord made him great with the killing of the giant Goliath and the Lord always guided him in all his ex-

ploits. His God has always been the one to forgive him after his horrible sin of adultery and murder, otherwise his life would have been turned off. The greatness of a man is always a gift from God. This truth must never be forgotten. Anyone the Lord might gather from the dust of his smallness and make of him an instrument of his glory. Indeed, it is right from humility that the Lord acts. Does not the Mother of Jesus sing her humility to the Lord? Does not she say that the Lord has looked at the humility of her servant and that is why the Almighty has done great things for her? Does not Jesus constitute his apostles simple and humble people, without any material wealth?

This is the history that God has worked in his people. Jesus is wise, intelligent, strong, rich in every spiritual gift and capable of operating any prodigy. Where do these things come from to him? Only from the Lord. They all descend from the sky. They do not come from the earth, from the flesh, from men and from human masters. These do not even know who God is and they ignore the truth that is placed in Holy Scripture. Human masters hardly read the letter. They are not qualified for the spirit that is in it. The Holy Spirit, upon the will of the Father of heaven, must be the one to enable to seek the Holy Spirit that is hidden in Scripture. If Jesus knows the truth of Scripture, this is only by God's gift. Everything in Him comes down from heaven. He himself descended from heaven. Mother of God, Woman made entirely by God, help us to have a true faith in Him.

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Sports, a means of harmonious and integral development of the person

Reflections from the document "Giving the personal best" of the Dicastery for the Laity, family and life (1.6.2018)

On June 1, 2018, the Dicastery for the Laity, family and life issued Giving the personal best, a document that "intends to offer a brief presentation of the vision of the Holy See and of the Catholic Church on sports" (1.1). In particular, the text collects and develops the papal teaching of the last decades - disseminated in a dense series of discourses to sportsmen - beginning with that of John Paul II, who defining sports as "a form of body and spirit gymnastics" (Address to the delegation of executives and players of the Italian football team "AC Milan", 12 May 1979), expressed the positive vision of the Church on it, as a reality capable of enhancing "everything that contributes constructively to the harmonious and integral development of the person, soul and body" (Address to the Italian National Olympic Committee, 20 December 1979).

Looking at sports as a means of "harmonious and integral development of the person" means first of all looking at the human person without any reductionism whatsoever, in its material and spiritual dimension. This anthropological vision is the essential premise of a Christian vision of sports. And it is only from a similar perspective that sports manages to place itself at the service of a truly integral and harmonious development of the person. In fact, as the document emphasizes, sports can be a useful training tool, helping the human being to forge and temper his personality and character and educating him to acquire and appreciate fundamental virtues and values

such as justice, loyalty, courage, respect for others, solidarity, sacrifice and perseverance. Nevertheless, in any case, it can surrogates to the proper spiritual formation of the person, that needs to constantly learn the image and likeness of God that bears impressed in his own nature, looking at Christ, the new and perfect Man, letting himself be guided by the light of his Word and drawing on his grace, which makes it capable of being realized, of being transformed into the image of Christ.

This principle has great value in a special way for parents, who must be helped by members of the Christian community to understand how the integral growth of their children - a process to whose central core is growth in relationship with the Lord and in the evangelical virtues - cannot be sacrificed, as often happens, with "collateral" activities, certainly useful, important, precious, but unable to support the development of the whole person. At the same time, Christians in various capacities engaged in the sports world - as experts or athletes - aware of the vocation deriving from their Baptism, are called to become for their colleagues "distant" from Christ and the Church an instrument of salvation; this, through the exemplariness of the personal behaviour, from which the very beauty of Christ must shine and through the proclamation of the Gospel, opening them to the transcendent dimension of existence and orienting them towards the encounter with the Lord, the only one capable of giving fullness to the life of man.

Father Davide Marino

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

AND THEY TOOK OFFENSE AT HIM
(XIV SUNDAY O.T. YEAR B)

WHETHER THEY HEED OR RESIST (Ez 2,2-5)

When the Lord sends a prophet among his people, he sends him to reveal to it all his love of salvation, redemption, forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation, invitation to penance and repentance. The prophet does not come as the last word of God, to indicate the end of a relationship between God and his people. Instead, he comes to say that the Lord is ready for reconciliation, on the condition that one gets converts and returns to the covenant. Ezekiel is sent to announce to the people what the Lord is about to do because of their evil conduct. If the prophet comes, it is because there is still time in God to delay or annul his decision to destroy the city. The prophet comes and manifests all the mercy and goodness of the Lord. But, by now the people are too far forwarded into evil. This has become its very nature. Why then does the Lord send the prophet? Because always someone could still repent.

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU (2Cor 12,7-10)

Saint Paul was enriched by God with every gift of wisdom, intelligence, capacity for conviction, power of the Holy Spirit and immediate knowledge of the truth of God. For all these gifts he could be made proud. In pride God withdraws and man remains naked with his spiritual misery. The Lord does not want Paul from an instrument of life, because of his pride, to be transformed into an instrument of death. That is why he allows him to be tormented by a thorn in the flesh. We ignore its nature. He says a spur of Satan to slap him. With this thorn he will have to live together for life. He begs the Lord to take it away from him. The Lord re-

plies him that it will remain forever. He might win it, overcome it and carry it with his grace. As long as the satanic germ of pride remains in the flesh and it remains there until death, so it will be for the thorn. Grace will give him every strength to bear its sting so that he does not succumb.

WHERE DID THIS MAN GET ALL THIS? (Mk 6: 1-6)

Whoever wants to walk with the Lord, according to truth, justice and wealth of faith, must know the works of the Lord and his action in the history of men. The Lord always reveals himself as the Creator. Even when Jesus called the first two Apostles he manifested himself as their Creator: "Come after me, I will make you fishers of men". In his humanity Jesus is the purest creation of the Father. He does not even have an earthly father according to the flesh. He has him according to the heart, the will, the spirit and the soul, but not according to the flesh. This is how our God and Lord acts. Jesus was not made great by man. It was the Father who made him great in everything. It was He who filled him with the Holy Spirit. It was He who poured into his heart all his divine gifts. Never might the flesh produce the works of the Spirit. Every work of truth, justice, sanctity and light can only come from God. To the question of the inhabitants of Nazareth there is only one answer to give: everything in Jesus comes from the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit. When in one person the works of divine truth and holiness are seen, the flesh must be kept out.

by the theologian,
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