

A PLAN FOR OUR NEW ASSOCIATION

Les Équipes Enseignantes (The Teachers-Teams) and La Paroisse Universitaire (The University Parish), after several years of contact and practical collaboration at both national level (particularly the Blois and Châtel meetings) and regional one, have decided to merge into a single association.

The creation of this new association only makes sense if it is the opportunity for a new plan, in order to revive the interest of Christians in State Education in a specific association.

This plan must take into account the present situation in its different components :

- on a professional level : recruitment to levels of comparative studies, common training in the IUFM, therefore common references and common language.

- on a social level : teachers address new, sometimes difficult audiences, who require us to review and reinforce our professional practices and to do this in consultation with each other.

In order to teach, as to believe, we must constantly examine the sense of our actions, spot and strengthen our solidarities.

- on an ecclesial level : a Church in which we play an active part, attentive to its new and diverse forms, in a secularized and pluralistic world experienced positively. The variety of the ways we link up with the Church allow us to also welcome those people who feel themselves on the fringes of the institution.

A plan based on shared convictions, on our common tradition.

One of our advantages is that we are not starting from nothing. The richness of our past contains differences of culture and sensitivity, some divergences lived through, spoken or silent, but also a

common conviction that our place in secular education and our Christian faith are perfectly complementary and mutually fruitful. And the first objective of our new association is to support, better than the two old ones separately, Christian teachers of the State Education in their effort in carrying out, through their faith, their professional duties and their membership of the Church.

Our firm choice of secular education in accordance with the principle put forward by the Vatican II Council of “the autonomy of worldly realities” and of freedom of conscience leads us to think that the presence of Christians within and among everyone, whatever their beliefs, is an essential condition to bear witness to our life and for the announcement of the Good News in contemporary society.

It seems clear today that the spreading of the Gospel cannot rest only on the institutions responsible for transmission or initiation. Likewise the current temptation of certain sectors of our Church to bring back those forms of Christianity or others based on truths in which to believe and on a re-established authority, seems a dead-end to us.

In fact, this choice of State Education expresses our specific spirituality : the Gospel makes us demonstrate the Love of God in practical terms to everyone without distinction. We do this first of all by looking positively at all pupils whatever their difficulties, their handicaps, their origins and by working with colleagues towards the development and fulfillment of each one. We are also keen to prepare each young person entrusted to us for his present and future responsibilities at both a personal and collective level, to make him aware of the riches and value of knowledge and culture, to give him the

sense and the taste for searching for truth and its demands.

That is our way, in school, of “accounting for the hope which is in us” (I Peter 3, 15) by respecting those we teach absolutely, be they children or young people.

A common plan to improve and develop

Being part of a team is our main blessing, through the support it gives to each of us. First of all, it is the place to go for friendship, for a patient listener, for a warm exchange, for immediate support. It is also the place to share, in particular to share professional life in the faith of Christ. It is the source of intellectual and spiritual development, of a better understanding of the world and of faith. Finally it is the springboard which allows us to throw ourselves into action with all those who want to make education and, to a larger extent, society go forward.

These teams, grouped together if necessary, are also capable of arranging periodic meetings where a whole group of Christian teachers belonging to a particular area can share their thoughts on a personal, professional or religious level. Other new ways of joining forces and exchanging ideas which future generations will think of will naturally take their place in the life of our association. It is up to us to listen to them and make way for them.

A national structure also represents another treasure to preserve. Its main role is to be a link, a channel of communication between all these groups. Of course, this link must appear in a regular publication addressed to all and reflecting the life and the actions of all, but also bringing from beyond the association elements of intellectual and spiritual thought and continuing education which are useful to sustain faith and action in education and society. There is also room for specific and local bulletins clearly linked with the national publication, where teams are in a

position to bring them about. The development of the Internet in recent years also provides us with another promising tool which is able to contribute to this link. And it is natural that this national structure, concerned about the visibility of the association, is responsible for voicing the opinion of the association to the public when circumstances make it desirable.

But this national structure is also the level singled out to organize seminars and various meetings which allow Christian teachers, whether members or not of our association, to take the time to reflect more deeply on both human and Christian matters. And what is more, as much at local or regional level as at national level (gatherings, meetings) the tradition of our associations for a long time has been to seek out, particularly in liturgy, creativity and beauty in the expression of faith. This tradition, like others, must always be revived so far as it builds the Christian community which we form in praising God. Moreover, this national association has contacts with international structures, both at European and World level. In this respect the benefits of the “Equipes Enseignantes” and the “Paroisse Universitaire” are complementary and must be preserved and developed.

At European level, the association will keep up its membership of the SIESC held to now by the “Paroisse Universitaire” where we mix with the diverse Christian members in the world of education and in society. We will be concerned about being enriched by this diversity, about informing others about the particular French experience of secular education and we will try to promote everything which moves towards the construction of a Europe of united and generous men and peoples. At world level, the links of solidarity and fraternity with the “Equipes Enseignantes” in Africa, America, Asia and Europe (Romania), coordinated through Dialogue

et Cooperation will be maintained and reinforced with an attitude of mutual questioning and stimulation.

As Christians, the members of the association have particular reasons, both personal and collective to support the development of peoples, particularly the poorest, in accordance with the Encyclical "Populorum Progressio". That's why the new association will keep up its membership of the CCFD held up to now by the "Equipes Enseignantes".

A progressive plan

The oldest members have for a long time contributed faithfully to the life of our two original associations. They have their part to play in these steps towards unification and change.

But this plan concerns first and foremost the Christian teachers in active life today and tomorrow. It's up to them to have their aspirations, suggestions and requests understood as widely as possible.

Together, we will work out the new forms of our presence in the world of education.

Conclusion

Our association suggests that Christian teachers, or those in research, support each other by sharing ideas, by deep reflection in their life where faith and professional commitment question and sustain each other. We are required to distinguish, individually and collectively, these new forms of our presence in State Education and in our pluralistic society.

It is in the truth of the life of each of us that the call of the Gospel resounds and that we recognize Jesus-Christ, He who tells us about the God of Love and awakens men to freedom. He demands no forced indoctrination but asks only to let the Gospel work through us.

This is our way of being present in the world and of assuming our responsibility as citizens and teachers.

This is our way of bringing an aspect of the Church to life.

It is in this hope that we wish to build our association.