

INTERLINK

TEACHERS' TEAMS – INDIA

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

Vol. XXVII, no. 7.

December 2022



²⁰¹ When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ⁰² saying, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” ⁰³ When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁰⁴ Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁰⁵ They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: ⁰⁶ ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

⁰⁷ Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance. ⁰⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage.” ⁰⁹ After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ They were overjoyed at seeing the star, ¹¹ and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

Mt 25 :13, Mk 13 :35, Lk 13:25

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Merry Christmas to all! Teachers' Teams of India wishes everyone a joyous Christmas filled with love and happiness! May the Christmas season be full of light and laughter for you and your family. Wishing you also a very Blessed New Year 2023.

Congratulations to Fr. Morissette on the occasion of your 61st Anniversary of Priesthood! Thank you, Father, for your faithful service to the people of God! May God bless you with good health, peace and happiness. May you continue to work faithfully for many more years in the Vineyard of the Lord. Lots of love and prayers from the Teachers' Teams of India.

Jacinta Pereira

EDITORIAL

This issue of the Interlink brings out another crucial aspect of our responsibility as teachers, i.e.

“Education to Social Awareness!”

What is social awareness? It is the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and especially those who are oppressed in one way or another.

Our TT members have taken up different social issues and shared their own experiences in this month's newsletter. For us educators, this is a grave matter to be discussed, debated and understood in order to help our students become aware of the plights of the oppressed and see what they can do to help them.

Social awareness is an important skill for children to develop in order to build positive relationships and make responsible decisions. In addition to improving relationships and communication skills, social awareness is also important for our own emotional well-being. When we are aware of the suffering of the poor, we are able to recognize our strengths and weaknesses, because this attitude brings us out of our own preoccupations.

So, social awareness is very important in life and this attitude should be developed in children from a very young age. What better

context than school/college education to bring about this social awareness? Teaching social awareness skills is an essential part of social emotional learning curriculum. How much emphasis is laid on this? In schools, more emphasis is laid on IQ and less on Emotional Intelligence.

According to Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, more than IQ, one of the core pillars of emotional intelligence is social awareness: the ability to perceive, understand and respond to the needs of others, especially the needs of the poor. Social awareness is where empathy is fostered. It creates the ability for students to interact positively and kindly with their peers. In addition it fosters the ability of students to identify and understand what other people are thinking and see how they suffer.

In short, it helps in developing empathy, appreciating diversity and showing respect for others. If in our education we impart these skills that foster social awareness, our world can become a better place to live in! There will be less strife! As members of the Teachers' Teams, let us reflect on the above and educate our children to be sensitive to the plights of the oppressed and become proactive in bringing them help.

Jacinta Pereira
National Coordinator, India

STAY AWAKE

The following reflections are from Vincent Lerins, the former Coordinator of the Teachers' Teams in Asia. He writes about education to social change: "This is an opportunity for radical change, a crater where the light shines in. This shining light for us Christians is the light of hope. An ecumenical Christian group organized a public prayer service on 15th October, in Sri Lanka, to awaken the Christian conscience of our people to engage in the struggle for justice, equality and fraternity. Herewith I am attaching the brief concept paper, I presented to a concerned group, which sparked off the birth of this ecumenical group."

At these critical times, the Lord demands our faithfulness and perseverance to save our society from all forms of domination, by animating the society to seek the true path of liberation.

Paulo Freire is a political educator at the service of the humanity, autonomy and liberation of all women, men, independent of their racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual orientation, social class, age or place of birth.

Based on consciousness raising of the reality he systematized political, ethical, scientific and philosophical education to enable decisions, options and commitments that offer the possibility of liberation for all women and all men and dialectally the transformation of the society. Paulo believed that changes would come through education and not by means of an armed bloody revolution which show little respect for other people.



In consciousness raising education, it is essential to base it on the different consciousness levels of our people. In our context the consciousness levels of most of our people vary from the closed broken consciousness level to the awakening consciousness level.

Those at the closed consciousness level are naive, dependent, alienated or suppressed. Those at the awakening consciousness level are alert, rebellious, critical of events and people, but not questioning the established system. The other two levels of consciousness are the Reforming con-

scious levels and the liberating and transformation consciousness level.

Those at the Reforming consciousness level start the struggle to improve the functioning of the system. Those at the Liberation and Transformation level question the old values and express new values, creatively develop new types of structure expressing the new values.

The structural change, which is conflictual, needs to be inspired through animation praxis of Reflection-Action-Reflection mobilizing to be engaged in the prophetic denouncement of evil and to be committed To Make Everything New.

For us, Christians, this inspiration comes through the Theological Reflection. An authentic theology interprets «God's words» as a mission to be accomplished. Thus when we engage ourselves in prayerful reading of the Bible in our social context, we hear God's Word request and we respond obediently, committing ourselves to engage in accomplishing our mission of the integral liberation and the transformation of our society.

Our challenge is the following: How can we animate our Christian community, based on our theological reflection, to raise their consciousness levels enabling them to make decisions and options for the transformation of our society? It is here that Paulo Freire's *Problem Posing Approach* based on dialogue can be of great help. He said: "I have to die as an educator in order to be born again as an educated, and it is necessary for the educated to die as an educated in order to be born again as an educator." (Paulo Freire)

Vincent Lerins

Former Coordinator of the Teachers' Teams in Asia

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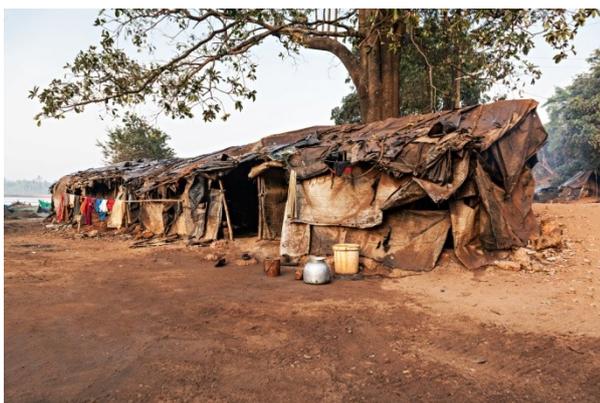
EDUCATION TO SOCIAL AWARENESS

If we want to promote education to social awareness among our students, we have first to open our eyes and see the injustices prevailing in society, identify the causes of these injustices, be motivated to bring solutions to them and get involved in action.

Opening our eyes

The first thing we have to do in collaboration with people of good will is to become aware of what is happening in society and see the injustices prevailing in it. Some of these injustices are seen in our own regions, cities or villages, where people are unemployed or exploited by the rich, despised or ignored because of their poverty. Other injustices are noticeable as it is the case at the national and international levels because of the gap in terms of income between various groups or between the rich nations and the developing ones.

We have to open our eyes and see the faces of those who are unjustly treated in society: the immigrants, the handicapped, the victims of hunger, the ill-treated women, the children who have been abused, the homeless.



The root causes of poverty

We have also to identify the causes of all these injustices. Poverty can no more be seen as the result of fate. It is often caused by selfishness and the thirst for profit that leads to all kinds of injustices: riches are not equitably shared, the world market profits from the low cost products, armed conflicts

are waged in so many places, corruption is rampant everywhere, the commerce of drugs is very prosperous, there is overpopulation in Asian countries.

One day, a young man walking alongside a river saw a person drowning. Jumping in, the rescuer pulled the victim out and began artificial respiration. While this was going on, another person in the river called for help. The young man jumped in again and pulled the second victim out. This happened several more times until the rescuer got up and walked away. A bystander approached him and asked in surprise: "Where are you going?" The rescuer replied: "I'm going upstream with some friends of mine to find out who's pushing these people in and see if we can stop it." (G. Egan)

Motivations we need

The injustices prevailing today in our modern societies are not very different from the ones that prevailed 2000 years ago in Palestine. However, Jesus got involved in liberating people from the clutches of these injustices. He also gives us the motivations that can inspire our action for the promotion of social justice in the world. Read what he said to the people of Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry: Luke 4: 16-21. Then share with your team mates on this issue, making use of the following questions:

- Have you ever experienced liberation from any kind of injustice?
- Do you know any person who can be considered a prophet of our times?
- How is that person performing a prophetic role in promoting social justice in India or elsewhere?
- If Jesus were to come to India today, what would he do and say about the social injustices prevailing in our country?
- Does charity have anything to do with justice? Illustrate what you mean.
- Can Christians resort to violence in their struggle for social justice? Why?

If some Christians today get involved with those who fight against poverty, it is often because they base their action on the Gospel. They see an intimate connection between Christ and his love for the poor, the sick and the oppressed.

In the Gospels, we find solid reasons on which Christians can base their option for the promotion of human rights and the dignity of the human person. Jesus is presented to us as one who gave a central place to human beings in his life. (Cf. Luke 12: 22-24). He even gave more importance to human beings than to the Law: for he said: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk. 2: 27).

That is what led him to defend the sick, women, the prostitutes and children. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19: 14). Jesus acknowledged the human dignity of every person, for all are children of God.

It is in that spirit that Pope Saint John Paul II wrote: "Every offense against the dignity of man is an offense against God himself, in whose image man is made" (*Ecclesia in America*, no. 57). This Exhortation of Saint John Paul II is inspired by the message of Jesus.

The answer Jesus gave to the question, "who is my neighbour?" (Lk. 10: 29) throws light on our relationship with others. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Ref. Lk. 10: 29-37), Jesus makes his interlocutor realize that the one who showed himself the neighbour of the man who had fallen in the hands of brigands is "the one who showed him mercy" (Lk. 10: 37). In other words, to love one's neighbour is to be concerned with his needs.

Jesus goes even to the extent of saying that the solidarity and the love shown to the neighbour become signs of God's tenderness. The one who bears that testimony shows that he loves his neighbour as well as God. That is what led Saint John to say: "If anyone says 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not

seen" (1 Jn. 4: 20). Such a vision can help us look at people, especially those in need, in a special way. Then we look at them with respect and compassion, not with scorn and contempt.

A construction worker shared what he heard from his fellow-workers: "I am originally from Maharashtra. When I was working on a construction site in Bangalore, I was with workers coming from different states. Most of them were rather poor and no one trusted the others. The Kannadiga would tell me: 'You know, beware of that man; he's a Tamilian. He may defraud you!' Later, the Tamilian would come and tell me: 'You must be careful with Malayalees, because they always find ways of cheating you.' And the Malayalee, in his turn, would say: 'You never know what to expect when you work with Telugus.' No one was worth anything in the eyes of his companions. All lived in oppressive situations and all acted as oppressors."

The presence of Christ is seen on the faces of those with whom he wanted to identify himself. That is what the evangelist Matthew wanted to communicate to us in his narrative of the Last Judgement in which we hear Jesus say: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." (Mt. 25: 35-36). That biblical message is not merely an invitation to be charitable. It is a message of wisdom that invites us to meet the risen Christ in all those we meet and especially those who suffer, because of sickness, poverty or injustice.

When we become conscious that Christ is present in the poor, we can no more exclude anyone from our love. That is easy to do to those who are dear to us, but it is a challenge to love strangers, offenders, criminals or homeless people. That is what Christians do when they perform acts of solidarity to support those who fight against poverty, injustice and exclusion. They see the face of the suffering Christ in them.

Hervé Morissette, csc

EDUCATION TO SOCIAL AWARENESS – AN EXPERIENCE

Our spirituality of education is that “we educate the hearts and minds of our youth” Therefore, our purpose is not only to educate the children entrusted to our care to build up their character, but to make them more aware of the contemporary conditions and plights of the poor and those who suffer from social injustices. Finally, we seek to see our children respond to all those needs in their life time personally as well as in a common effort.

I have been teaching and administering in schools for more than 26 years in Bangladesh. Fortunately, most of the time I worked in two schools, they are St. Placid’s school and college at Chattogram and St. Philip’s High School and College at Dinajpur. In both institutes, we had annual and regular programs to visit places where the target group lives. Of course, it’s not me but my ancestors who initiated the exposure program and I followed up.

Normally during the second term of the academic year, the students come to school on a designated day. We guide them, form groups under the supervision of a teacher and student leader. We give them topics and questions to write their reports on the visits they make. We send them to slums, hospitals, factories, day labourers on the roadside, street children in the city, homeless families on the roads, railway stations, farmers at their work fields and other appropriate places. We teach them the code of conduct to deal with the target groups.

All seem very enthusiastic about the day’s work, as they are going to make a special discovery. They explore different areas following the guidelines we give them, observe life and reality, see the living conditions of the poor, ask questions, collect information, find out the problems, the causes of these problems, reflect together, propose ways of solving these problems. Finally, they elaborate the responsibilities and liabilities of the society and the State. They bring up their possible contribution and participation at present and promise to promote social justice

and equity. They take almost the whole day of school time to explore problems, return to the classroom, give attendance and go back home with a victorious smile.

After a certain period, the students submit their group assignments with colourful decorations and articulation. Teachers, especially sociology teachers evaluate the assignments and give marks which are counted/added in place of their class tests (no class tests in that term) or continuous assessments (CA) in sociology. Our students eagerly wait for this day to come every year. They like it, and they enjoy it, and we feel that, in that way, they form their hearts with love besides forming their minds.

Thus, in both institutes we run two literacy schools, with the help of the former students, for the underprivileged who have no ability in special education. Our former students always give scholarships to the poor and meritorious students in our schools. For many years, the present students, teachers and parents of our school, in collaboration with the local people, have been arranging food items for 500 families during Eid, for 250 families during the Puja and for 200 families during Christmas. Now, we know that our students are spontaneously responding to social needs like helping people during floods and cyclones, distributing clothing during winter and distributing Iftar during Ramadan.

Keeping touch with the students through social media, we feel proud of their integral formation during their schooling at our institutions. In the beginning students, teachers and parents did not understand the need and impotence of this kind of intervention, but little by little, the response was very positive and they appreciated it highly.

Now the whole city knows that the students of our schools will come/go for this kind of exposure, every year. They witness this exceptional education and the formation of responsible educators. Thus, our education

system is unique and holistic. We are not educating students merely to become, heartless robots, but sensible and responsible human beings who will not be selfish, but who will contribute something worthwhile to human beings, nature and mother earth.

Our former students communicate with us frequently and acknowledge what they learnt from our institutions through all these social interventions (co-curricular activities, exposure programs) during the periods of schooling. They see the difference between them and other colleagues regarding morality, sensibility, responsibility, honesty, loyalty and dedication. They also see the difference with their classmates in higher studies, when their teachers ask them in which schools they stu-

died. I feel honored when students communicate to us what they do in some kind of social involvement, organizing programs with their school friends. I feel proud of being a teacher, and I feel privileged to have such ancestors who have introduced these marvelous growth processes.

For students, it is not possible to remember what we taught them from various books, but it is possible to remember what they learnt from our life examples and what is different from normal teaching. Thus, they grow differently and efficiently. The response to social needs is genuine and human. Finally, we all together glorify God's creation in the atmosphere of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

Nirmal Francis Gomes, csc
Chaplain of the TTs in Bangladesh

NEWS BITS



The Raya Team visited the Home for Destitutes at Pao de St. Antonio at Curtolim, Goa, on the 28th of November. We distributed rosaries to the inmates and then said the rosary together with the prayer to St. Anthony.

We donated money for their Fund and also gave each one 300/- Rs for medicines. We gave the house biscuits and toasts to be given to the inmates. They were very happy. It was a lovely evening in their midst. (Pamela Gracias)

AWARENESS OF CHILD ABUSE

There are a few ways to promote awareness of sex abuse among your students:

- By educating their parents, you can bring awareness to your students about child abuse;
- By informing yourselves on the statistics of child abuse and understanding that even your own children could be at risk.
- You may know somebody who is or has the potential to be abusive. So know where to go or whom to call in your community, if at any time you suspect or discover a child is being hurt or threatened.
- Listen and validate when a child reveals abuse. Very rarely do children lie about abuse. Try to remain open, calm, curious, and non-judgmental, if a child reports or alludes to having been abused.
- I cannot stress enough how important it is to remain calm. It's obviously gut-wrenching to hear your child may have been hurt, and it's further challenging and complicated when the allegations are made against somebody you know and trust. But your initial reaction may determine whether the child shuts down and bottles up the violation, or reports and ends the trauma to seek healing.

Often, children will report only parts of what happened or may pretend it happened to someone else, in order to gauge how an adult will react. Be patient and allow the child to feel safe enough to continue opening up. Responding emotionally or with judgment, blame, or disbelief may cause the child to shut down and avoid talking about the abuse.

From early on, begin facilitating conversations with your children, letting them know they can come to you about anything, no matter what anyone else says. Abuse is hard for children to comprehend, let alone talk about. They often internalize a sense of fear, embarrassment, and shame, and wind up believing they are at fault or somehow to

blame for what happened. Further, people who abuse frequently coerce silence via emotional abuse. Warning the victim won't be believed, like threats of harm to the victim or their loved ones. Teach your children that it's your job to protect them, not the other way around, and demonstrate unconditional love so they feel safe enough to talk to you.

Use age-appropriate language and find moments to educate your children about their bodies, about appropriate versus inappropriate touch, and about sexuality as they get older. Sex and sexuality are often awkward, uncomfortable, or taboo topics in many families; however, it's important that you, as the adult, demonstrate and model that embarrassing or difficult topics are still important and do not need to be off-limits or avoided.

While it's unhealthy to isolate or shelter our children, we can be selective about what daycare schools, and activities they participate in. Ensure that background checks are done on any individuals working directly with children, and advocate for staff trainings on the prevention, recognition, and reporting of child abuse. Communicate regularly with your children about the other adults and peers in their lives.

The signs of abuse are not always easy to recognize without hindsight; however, step in and talk to your child if you notice any emotional or behavioral changes, such as increased anxiety, withdrawal, isolation, rebellion, or angry outbursts. It's important to explore any signs of physical abuse, including bruises, rashes, or swelling. Pay attention to physical problems, such as urinary tract infections, or frequent complaints of things like headaches or stomachaches that aren't medically explained. Understand it's normal for children to be inquisitive and exploratory regarding gender and sexuality, but watch out for any sexual behavior, language, or curiosity that does not seem age-appropriate.

Usha Rani.
National Secretary

SERVING CHRIST IN THE POOR

The following text from St. John Chrysostom was written around the year 390 AD and is still very relevant today, It could be read during one of our meetings. Then the team members could be invited to share their reflections on this prophetic text.

Would you honour the body of Christ? Do not despise his nakedness; do not honour him here in church clothed in silk vestments and then pass him by unclothed and frozen outside

Remember that he who said, “This is my body”, and made good his words, also said, “You saw me hungry and gave me no food”, and, “in so far as you did it not to one of these, you did it not to me”.

In the first sense, the body of Christ does not need clothing but worship from a pure heart. In the second sense, it does need clothing and all the care we can give it. We must learn to be discerning Christians and to honour Christ in the way in which he wants to be honoured. It is only right that honour given to anyone should take the form most acceptable to the recipient, not to the giver.

Peter thought he was honouring the Lord when he tried to stop him washing his feet, but this was far from being genuine homage. So, give God the honour he asks for, that is give your money generously to the poor. God has no need of golden vessels but of golden hearts.

I am not saying you should not give golden altar vessels and so on, but I am insisting that nothing can take the place of almsgiving. The Lord will not refuse to accept the first kind of gift but he prefers the second, and quite naturally, because in the first case only the donor benefits, in the second case the poor get the benefit. The gift of a chalice may be ostentatious almsgiving is pure benevolence.

What is the use of loading Christ’s table with gold cups while he himself is starving? Feed the hungry and then, if you have any money left over, spend it on the altar table. Will you make a cup of gold and withhold a cup of

water? What use is it to adorn the altar with cloth of gold hangings and deny Christ a coat for his back? What would that profit you?



Tell me: if you saw someone starving and refused to give him any food, but instead spent your money on adorning the altar with gold, would he thank you? Would he not rather be outraged? Or if you saw someone in rags and stiff with cold and then did not give him clothing, but set up golden columns in his honour, would he not say he was being made a fool of and insulted?

Consider that Christ is that tramp who comes in need of a night’s lodging. You turn him away and then start laying rugs on the floor, draping the walls, hanging lamps on silver chains on the columns. Meanwhile the tramp is locked up in prison and you never give him a glance. Well again I am not condemning munificence in these matters.

Make your house beautiful by all means, but also look after the poor, or rather look after the poor first. No one was ever condemned for not adorning his house, but those who neglect the poor were threatened with hell fire for all eternity and a life of torments with devils. Adorn your house if you will, but do not forget your brother in distress. He is a temple of infinitely greater value.

From a homily of St. John Chrysostom

PARABLE OF THE BRICK

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new car. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the car's side door!

He slammed on the brakes and backed the car back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car, shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?" The young boy was apologetic. "Please, mister...please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do," He pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop..."

With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said, "he rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a

linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay. "Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger. Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home.



It was a long, slow walk back to the car. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message: "Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!"

God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.

(Anon)

NEWS BITS

In our Karaikal parish, the members of decided to start a youth wing. On that food to poor people. So, some of our contributed, and fed the poor with day, that is 27th November 2022, of Karaikal Teachers' Teams, did the of Karaikal Parish and distributed Priest of Karaikal and sisters of Cluny programme.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul occasion they planned to distribute TT members joined with them, food bags for lunch. On the same Sunday morning we, the members Rosary Rally at Puthuthurai village Rosary to the children. Asst. Parish Convent helped to conduct the

EDUCATION TO CARE FOR THE POOR

Education is the best weapon to eradicate the prevailing unhealthy disparities. It is a call to freedom. It opens up a world full of knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Prov. 9:10).

In Kerala we have an educational system where financial disparities subside below the surface owing to two reasons.

Primarily the government promotes the uniform for all school students. Secondly we have the noon meal program where everybody enjoys the same menu. Students come from different financial backgrounds.

However, they are treated equal in the school premises. We have, as per the data, very few school dropouts. Local bodies are made vigilant in this regard.

Our teachers usually visit the houses of children. When they go, they go with other children. The visits strengthen the bond between not only the teacher – student relationship, but also the student-student relationships.



It was in 2018, weeks after the great flood, that I went to a place called Apangad, three kilometres away from our school. A number of children were coming to our school from this place. It was a strip of land adjacent to backwaters. When we reached the area around 10 a.m, it was the time of high tide. The situation was embarrassing. Most of the houses were flooded. People were busy moving their household articles and appliances to safety. We joined them. The surroundings were really horrible with waste.

We recognized the real condition of our children. They were financially poor and they were leading a miserable life. The water took hours to subside. The children from that place did come to school without fail as if the odd situation was only a part of their life.



From the part of the school, we forwarded some financial help and approached the local body to address the problem. The result of our visit was slowly emerging.

There was a student in the class who was rich, being the son of a successful contractor. The child won't mingle with other children. He was an autocratic and selfish child. He looked at others with contempt. After the visit there was a serious change in this child. He started to enjoy the company of others. He insisted that his father helped his fellow students. Actually, we could gain him. From that incident, I used to insist that the teachers take children along with them during their house visits.

Modern educational systems promote social exposure programs. Being a graduate student, I myself had the experience of two weeks staying with the fishermen. I had to stay with them and to accompany them while they went for fishing. It gave me a clear idea how hardworking these people were. The greatest thing I noticed was the love with which they cherished their classmates. Our Lord Jesus chose fishermen to be his disciples. Their simplicity, sincerity, hard work and love cannot be ignored. I would suggest that in order to impart fruitful education, we help our children to be useful to society. To achieve that purpose, we should give them sufficient exposure to the weaker margins of the society.

Jude Varghese
Regional animator of TTs in Kerala.

TEACHERS' TEAMS CHARACTERISTICS

This is a continuation of the review we undertook during the last months concerning the characteristics of the Teachers' Teams

Third pole of reflection: the secular character of society and the Church

Fundamentally, the secular character of life implies the disestablishment of the Church (or the religions), in other words the refusal to mix the forms and the fields of action. In certain countries (e.g. France), the secular character of society is above all a protection against indoctrination and proselytism, as well as a guarantee of respect for all, on the juridical plane,

Today, we reaffirm our conviction that there is no contradiction in being a Christian and working in a secular institution.

To serve in a secular institution is, first of all, to respect the other by welcoming and acknowledging him with his human values, his faith, his culture. To take the means to know and acknowledge that other person does not prevent us from respecting one another's convictions.

The secular character of the school is more than ever necessary. It has to be deepened in relation to the realities of today. It has also to be constantly built up at the level of collective reflection as well as at the level of our experience, our professions and our commitments.

This leads us

- To act in such a way that public instruction may foster encounter and dialogue as well as make it possible for people to live together in harmony.
- To develop our ability to understand the educational systems of other countries and see in what way they offer an education for all.
- To state again that the school does not have a mere utilitarian function to answer the needs of society.
- To protect the school and the students against economic, commercial and ideological pressures.

Thus we will help our Churches to take the secular character of the school into account by being present in it.

Questions to pursue our reflection

1. Every team-mate could now share his/her testimony on the particular way he/she lives his/her faith in the school as a lay teacher and a Christian. In other words, how does he/she succeed to see no contradiction in being a Christian and serving in a secular institution?
2. Do we agree to say that the secular character of the school is more than ever necessary today? For what reasons?
3. How can we commit ourselves, either individually or as a team, to achieve the goals stated above?
4. Can we say in what way we respect the secular character of society and the school?
5. What differentiates us from our Christian colleagues who are also at the service of education, but in Catholic schools?