

Pleading for a closer collaboration between the school and the Church

This year 2016 has been recommended by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church as “the Anniversary Year of the Orthodox Christian youth’s religious education”. This decision of the highest forum of our Church is a well-articulated invitation addressed to the pleroma of the whole Church, to reflect together on the responsibility the Church leaders must always feel, and also on the children and young people’s parents for their adequate education. The need for such education results from the very position young people have as members of the Church (in Romania at least), in whose belief they were baptized and committed by their parents and godparents that they will know, deepen and live the Orthodox faith, which was proclaimed in their baptism.

In this context, some considerations should be highlighted that rediscover the need for such an education and the ways in which this can be effectively achieved.

1. This third Christian millennium, we all live in, is based on the need to know things and phenomena in general, that are absolutely necessary for the life in society. The classical scientific knowledge does not cover all the sphere of knowledge, within which the religious faith cannot be excluded, both as a cultural and as a spiritual phenomenon. Therefore, the Christian education is not an ideological indoctrination, as it was pejoratively stated, modelled on the one before year 1989, but it is a necessity arising from the very profound Christian identity of the Romanian people, who, in his deep intimate structure, has the Christendom seal from the very beginning. Every Romanian has to know his identity as an urgent and permanent necessity.

2. Due to the progress of the contemporary society, an exacerbated emphasizing of the material world knowledge was reached, as the only

reality, and the man's reason was considered as the only force that can help us to understand the world. In other words, in today post-modern society secularization is increasingly predatory, drawing man's attention to the material goods, to the immediate pleasures, and consumption of all kinds, alienating man from God and from his relation to the eternal values of the Gospel. Thus, people's interest for the religious and spiritual matters is pushed to the periphery of their concerns. The media generally cultivates this "taste" of man towards sensational, vulgar, cultural and moral dissolution. This reality does not have the gift to focus today's youth attention towards the need for a higher meaning of life, true joy and their fulfilment.

3. Today's secularized world became increasingly reluctant to the religious universe, to an education which includes the religious element, at least as a factor of culture, humanization and spiritual prosperity. Moreover, this world is really fighting against the desire of others to share the bright values of Christianity in general and of Orthodoxy in particular. The Church cannot ignore this hostile context against her and her mission in the world, requiring an approach of her presence and mission, taking into account such a context.

4. On the other hand, I think the Church and the school should make an honest assessment of how the process of religious education is carried out in schools, whereas the echoes of this education reveal some worrying aspects related to superficiality, inadequacies and deficiencies facing religious education in schools. Of course, it is not a generalization, as there are many happy examples in Romanian schools, but also the contrary cases are increasingly common. Therefore, without a diminution of negative cases, there will be more and more difficult for the Church to assert and convince on the need for religious education in schools.

5. The orientation of religious education to the concrete life of the people and to a more direct and more vivid link with Church services and especially the Divine Liturgy is again a goal, yet, expected. The theology teachers must be increasingly aware of the fact that they are both serving the school and the Church, they do not do "art for the sake of art" but have a well defined objective of their educative mission, namely to train people to be better and more honest, more human and more faithful, to have a more pronounced religious-moral character, in a world which does not ap-

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preciate these values. This requires a closer connection between teachers, priests and parishes, as well as outlining some educational partnerships between parishes and schools. From these permanent links, not only the Church would benefit, but also the school.

Thus, a new vision is required both on the process of religious education and on the school, by encompassing everything that is brighter and more suitable in terms of educational, cultural and spiritual, with clear opening to the universe of knowledge, to interdisciplinary dialogue and to cooperation, in a general way. Will we be able to imagine such a creative and fruitful vision, but more efficient than the preceding one?

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