



'Legio Sanctae Familiae' The Legion of the Holy Family

Under the Patronage of
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
The Immaculate Heart of Mary
The Most Chaste Heart of St Joseph



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On 31st December, 1929, Pope Pius XI issued his encyclical letter 'Divini Illius Magistri' - 'On Christian Education'. It is a great encyclical and contains much valuable information. There is a tendency nowadays within Catholic circles to ignore these wonderful encyclicals because they were written almost one hundred years ago. One is accused of 'living in the past' and of not being 'up to date'. To which I respond with the words of St Paul to the Galatians.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Galatians 1:8)

The words from the book of Ecclesiastes are also relevant.

*"What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
and there is nothing new under the sun.*

*Is there a thing of which it is said,
"See, this is new"?*

*It has been already,
in the ages before us.*

*There is no remembrance of former things,
nor will there be any remembrance
of later things yet to happen
among those who come after."*

(Ecclesiastes 1:9-11)

Pope Pius XI is well aware of the sentiments of those who are always looking for something new and who disparage the past out of hand without looking for the golden nuggets of wisdom which exist in every age. These are timeless because they are of God. After his introductory paragraphs where he outlines his desire for the proper education and formation of children, Pope Pius XI begins to address the matter of Catholic education.

"We wish to dedicate to our beloved youth, and to commend to all those whose office and duty is the work of education.



The Catechism Lesson - Jules-Alexis Muenier (1863-1942)

Indeed never has there been so much discussion about education as nowadays; never have exponents of new pedagogical theories been so numerous, or so many methods and means devised, proposed and debated, not merely to facilitate education, but to create a new system infallibly efficacious, and capable of preparing the present generations for that earthly happiness which they so ardently desire." (Divini Illius Magistri 4-5)

The Pope is well aware of the discussions raging around the best methods of education. These discussions continue in our day with various different methods being proposed as 'the ideal' which will relieve poverty and most of the problems of the world. In this regard, education becomes a false God, and those who promote it as the solution to all of our problems are idol worshippers. Pope Pius XI continues

"The reason is that men, created by God to His image and likeness and destined for Him Who is infinite perfection realize today more than ever amid the most exuberant material progress, the insufficiency of earthly goods to produce true happiness either for the individual or for the nations. And hence they feel more keenly in themselves the impulse towards a perfection that is higher, which impulse is implanted in their rational nature by the Creator Himself.

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This perfection they seek to acquire by means of education. But many of them with, it would seem, too great insistence on the etymological meaning of the word, pretend to draw education out of human nature itself and evolve it by its own unaided powers.

Such easily fall into error, because, instead of fixing their gaze on God, first principle and last end of the whole universe, they fall back upon themselves, becoming attached exclusively to passing things of earth; and thus their restlessness will never cease till they direct their attention and their efforts to God, the goal of all perfection, according to the profound saying of Saint Augustine: “Thou didst create us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee.” **(Divini Illius Magistri 6)**

Pope Pius XI is making a critical point here. This is back in 1929 but already great strides have been made in providing material comfort to people. In our day, our material comforts far exceed those of 1929. The Pope points out that even with great material comforts, man becomes restless, because he realises “the insufficiency of earthly goods to produce true happiness either for the individual or for the nations.”

The perfect solution that is proclaimed is ‘education’ and thus many fall into error, because their focus is not on God, Who is the first principle and last end of, not just man, but of the whole universe. We are created for God and we will never find true happiness until we rest our hearts in Him.

“It is therefore as important to make no mistake in education, as it is to make no mistake in the pursuit of the last end, with which the whole work of education is intimately and necessarily connected. In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man’s last end, and that in the present order of Providence, since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, who alone is “the way, the truth and the life,” there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education.” **(Divini Illius Magistri 7)**

Once again, with crystal clarity, the Pope outlines the purpose of education and the dangers of getting education wrong. The Pope is not saying that education has no value, far from it. He points out that there is a higher purpose to which all education must be directed.

We live in a time of great hostility to the Catholic Church and those who oppose her, seek to destroy and dismantle the Catholic education system. These enemies know the importance that the Catholic Church places on the family and so they seek to undermine the family because the family is the first school of education for children. We came across this in the previous series of articles on Pope Leo XIII’s



Jean Baptiste de la Salle - Founder of Schools

encyclical ‘*Sapientiae Christianae*’, where he gave some stark warnings that are coming to pass in our day.

“But, should those leagued together in wickedness hurry onward in the road they have boldly chosen, should they increase in influence and power in proportion as they make headway in their evil purposes and crafty schemes, there will be ground to fear lest the very foundations nature has laid for States to rest upon be utterly destroyed.” **(Sapientiae Christianae 39)**

“The family may be regarded as the cradle of civil society, and it is in great measure within the circle of family life that the destiny of the States is fostered. Whence it is that they who would break away from Christian discipline are working to corrupt family life, and to destroy it utterly, root and branch. From such an unholy purpose they allow not themselves to be turned aside by the reflection that it cannot, even in any degree, be carried out without inflicting cruel outrage on the parents.” **(Sapientiae Christianae 42)**

The evidence of the attacks on proper education and on the traditional understanding of family are plain to see for anyone who cares to look. But, we are busy and it takes time, courage, perseverance and self-discipline to fight those who seek to corrupt our families and our

societies. Also, we must clearly identify a problem before we can solve it. In this regard, Pope Pius XI has done us a great favour with *Divini Illius Magistri*, because he has done the work for us.

Our job is to strive to implement the solutions. This is made more difficult because many of those who hold authority in the Catholic Church, mostly ignore the teachings of Pope Pius XI on the matter of education. They are actively co-operating with those who are working to corrupt our children. Back to *Divini Illius Magistri*.

“From this we see the supreme importance of Christian education, not merely for each individual, but for families and for the whole of human society, whose perfection comes from the perfection of the elements that compose it.

From these same principles, the excellence, we may well call it the unsurpassed excellence, of the work of Christian education becomes manifest and clear; for after all it aims at securing the Supreme Good, that is, God, for the souls of those who are being educated, and the maximum of well-being possible here below for human society.

And this it does as efficaciously as man is capable of doing it, namely by cooperating with God in the perfecting of individuals and of society, in as much as education makes upon the soul the first, the most powerful and lasting impression for life according to the well-known saying of the Wise Man, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”(Proverbs 22:6) With good reason therefore did St. John Chrysostom say, “What greater work is there than training the mind and forming the habits of the young?” (**Divini Illius Magistri 8**)

The enemies of the Catholic Church are well aware of the importance of education and that is why they are infiltrating the Catholic schools in order to turn the education system to their own wicked ends. They are training children towards evil ends in the hope that they will not depart from those evil ends. The passing of the fake marriage referendum in Ireland in 2015 and the passing of the referendum to permit the killing of innocent human beings in their mother’s wombs in 2018, which has led to the murder of more than 30,000 innocents since 2019, is ample proof that our enemies are succeeding in their conquest of the once Catholic schools.

Pope Pius XI directs our gaze towards Jesus in order for us to understand how important Christian education is.



A Sister of Charity Teaching Children - George Hardy (1822 - 1909)

“But nothing discloses to us the supernatural beauty and excellence of the work of Christian education better than the sublime expression of love of our Blessed Lord, identifying Himself with children, “*Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in my name, receives me.*”(Mark 9:36) - (**Divini Illius Magistri 9**)

Pope Pius now begins to teach us how we can avoid the pitfalls in education by outlining the essential aspects of what constitutes Christian education and the various different roles of those who hold authority in regard to the education of youth.

“Now in order that no mistake be made in this work of utmost importance, and in order to conduct it in the best manner possible with the help of God’s grace, it is necessary to have a clear and definite idea of Christian education in its essential aspects, viz., who has the mission to educate, who are the subjects to be educated, what are the necessary accompanying circumstances, what is the end and object proper to Christian education according to God’s established order in the economy of His Divine Providence.

Education is essentially a social and not a mere individual activity. Now there are three necessary societies, distinct from one another and yet harmoniously combined by God, into which man is born: two, namely the family and civil society, belong to the natural order; the third, the Church, to the supernatural order.” (**Divini Illius Magistri 10 - 11**)

Pope Pius XI will now elucidate on the three societies into which man is born and on their characteristic authority, duties, and spheres of governance. It is worth dedicating the next article to this very interesting topic as it will show us the parameters of each society. It is also very revealing when we look at the societies we now live in, as we can see where the civil society is encroaching beyond its authority.