

Study and Discussion Guide

Gravissimum Educationis

The Declaration on Christian Education

Vatican Council II

Promulgated by Pope Paul VI

October 28, 1965

Developed by:



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

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Gravissimum Educationis

The Declaration on Christian Education

Background

October 28, 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of *The Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)* issued by Vatican Council II. This is the seminal document for all subsequent documents on Catholic education, whether considering that topic in general or considering Catholic schools, in particular. As such, it is an important document for all those involved in Catholic education in any way.

Although developed primarily as a tool for group discussion, the Study and Discussion Guide may also be used as a resource for independent study. It can be useful for professional development for those who serve in Catholic school or as a means to inform and involve parents in discussions on Catholic education.

The Declaration on Catholic Education is available on the Holy See's website.

Click below to access the document.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html

Format

The format of the Guide is meant to provide room for note-taking when reading or discussing the document. The questions are organized according to the specific sections of the document as it is written. The number of questions or number of sections considered at any one time is easily adaptable according to the group's preference.



Part 1: The Meaning of the Universal Right to Education

1. Discuss what it means when the Council Fathers say that education is a universal right?
2. What are the two main aims of true human formation? How do these aims relate to the living of a Christian life?
3. In what way does the *Declaration on Christian Education* provide for the education of the whole person? How is this done in your school?
4. Discuss the Church's position as set forth in the *Declaration on Christian Education* on the judging of moral values.

Part 2: Christian Education

1. Why does a Christian have a right to a Christian education?
2. What is the main goal of Christian education?
3. Why is Christian education critical for young people?
4. What opportunities are provided by your parish and/or your Catholic school for young people to “bear witness to the hope that is in them?” Why is this important for young people?

Part 3: The Authors of Education

1. Who are the principal and primary educators of children? Why?
2. Explain why the family is the “first school of social virtues.”
3. How are the two great commandments introduced in family life?
4. What is the role of the community/state in education?
5. Why does the Church have the duty to educate?

Part 4: Various Aids to Christian Education

1. How is catechetical instruction different from other types of instruction?

2. The Church also uses “other aids which belong to the general heritage of man” to educate. What are examples of these aids? How are both catechetical and other types of instruction in your school?

3. Are the aids mentioned in question 2 always positive? Explain.

Part 5: The Importance of Schools

1. Why is the school “of special importance” among all the instruments of education?

2. How does the Church view the profession of teaching?

3. What qualities or characteristics does teaching demand? Can you think of an example of a teacher who has these qualities? What effect can such a teacher have?



Part 6: The Duties and Rights of Parents

1. Why should parents have “true liberty in their choice of schools?” How can government practices limit that choice?
2. Identify tasks or responsibilities that the state legitimately has in regard to educating its citizens.
3. How can associations of parents be beneficial for education?

Part 8: Catholic Schools

1. In what ways are Catholic schools like other schools?

2. What is the special and “proper function” of the Catholic school? Why do you think this so important in today’s culture?

3. How does the establishment of Catholic schools benefit the entire human community?

4. How do Catholic schools relate to
 - a. freedom of conscience,
 - b. parental rights
 - c. betterment of culture

5. What is the special importance of teachers in the Catholic school?

6. What is the duty of parents in regard to Catholic education?

Part 9: Different Types of Catholic Schools

1. How does the Church regard Catholic schools which are attended by non-Catholic students?
2. Give examples of the “types” of Catholic schools considered in the document.
3. The document cites some persons who are in need of “special care” in Catholic schools. Who are they? How does your school address any of these needs?

Part 10: Catholic Colleges and Universities

1. In Catholic education, what should the relationship be between faith and science?
2. Why do you think the document takes care to specify that lectures in sacred theology should be “suited to lay students?”
3. What provision is made in the document for Catholic students who are attending colleges which are not Catholic? Why is this important?
4. What comment does the document make concerning the career of teaching? Why is this significant?

Part 11: Faculties of Sacred Sciences

1. Why are faculties of sacred science so important to the Church?

2. What is the particular role of these faculties and why are they important to the handing on of the faith?

Part 12: Coordination to be Fostered in Scholastic Matters

1. How can Catholic schools of all levels of education cooperate in their mission? How can Catholic colleges and universities be of service to their colleagues in primary, elementary and secondary schools?

Conclusion

1. Why does the Council encourage young people to consider teaching? What does this say about the mission of teaching?
2. How does the Council show great esteem for education in the conclusion of this document? How does this impact you as an educator or someone involved in Catholic education?