



Apporto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice all'educazione (1872-2022)

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CHALLENGES AND RESOURCES TO RE-ESTABLISH TODAY'S SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL "PRESENCE"

Communication in the Times of Digital Algorithms

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ABSTRACT

In this intervention, I wish to invite participants to reflect on what it means to be an educator in a world that is marked by the profound cultural changes that are being forged by digital and social media. When we think about the changes in communication, what some commentators call the 'digital revolution', it is natural to focus on the technological developments. We are fascinated by the speed with which communication devices are becoming more powerful, smaller, more connected and accessible. During Covid, these technologies have proved themselves indispensable for the delivery of distance education. While this focus on the technologies is understandable, the truth is that the most profound change is not technological but cultural: the real challenge is to appreciate how much is changing in the ways that people, especially young people, are gathering information, are forming their opinions, are expressing themselves, are establishing relationships and building communities. These changes, moreover, are not just happening 'outside' the Church but within our institutions and they are shaping the communities we seek to serve.

The Church's educational presence must be maintained in the digital world. The real challenge, however, is to establish a presence that recognises and responds to the distinctive culture of that environment. Just as in previous times, educators had to understand the culture, languages and customs of the communities they sought to educate; so also today, we have to be attentive to our way of being present, the priorities we seek to address and how we engage with the values and dynamics that characterize the networks. When it comes to understanding how we should be present in the digital environment, we need to ask the right question. It is not about how we should use the new technologies to



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educate but rather how we can be an educating presence in the new 'world' that has been brought into being by these technologies.

This requires us to re-think what it means to be a teacher, our pedagogical methods, our curriculum and the types of skills and capacities we wish to impart to our students. We must embrace the potential of the digital platforms to contribute to our educational efforts while also being critically alert to some specific challenges that digital culture poses for our world in terms of increased inequality, polarization and 'meritocracy'.