



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

PERCORSI, SFIDE E PROSPETTIVE

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Terza Sessione PERCORSI E PROSPETTIVE PER IL FUTURO DELL'EDUCAZIONE ALLA LUCE DEL SISTEMA PREVENTIVO

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INTRODUZIONE

Women's Resources for Education, especially for education in an integral ecology for sustainable human and social development

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"I've never experienced air pollution."

Your Excellencies, Reverend Sisters and Fathers, distinguished guests, educators and everyone joining this esteemed International Congress online, those are the words of a bright-eyed twelve-year-old child. She lives in Delhi, the capital of India – known to have the worst air quality of any major city worldwide – a metropolis where the horrendous air irreversibly damages the lungs of 50% of all its children – a staggering 2.2 million little ones. It turned out that the child's parents had kept her insulated from the bad air by not smoking, installing air purifiers at home, and commuting only in their own air-conditioned car. Being one of the nine in ten people on this Earth who breathe polluted air every day, I was rendered speechless. What life lessons is she learning?

There are many ways academics prepares us. In our campuses we are meant to acquire our highest potential as human beings, as we learn values, foster friendships, play and exercise, gain skills and understand concepts. However, educational resources that prepare us for life in the world can be surprisingly uncommon.

On a global scale, thirty years of failed negotiations by skilled diplomats have shown that vast scientific research and evidence has not yet convinced us to get our act together to avert the climate emergency. We live in a world that profiteers by commoditising



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bountiful resources into scarcity, that compels vulnerable women to give up work and forces girls to drop out of school as they are sooner affected by the deepening planetary crisis. Humankind's greed, apathy and selfishness is hurtling us faster and deeper into ecological and social collapse. We are educated in technology and economy whose unholy nexus pitted development against the environment – a polarity that never should have been.

What about life skills? Financial security largely enables us to escape the tragic reality that is gender violence, but how many of our teenagers finish schools having learnt how to invest, or how to open and operate a bank account? Take the quest for a career – does our education equip us to cope with the rut of earn, eat, expend? Has our academics taught us how to effectively resolve conflict, or grapple with the glass ceiling, the silencing we face as women, the discrimination and grudges against menstrual leave, maternity benefits, time off for childcare and household chores? We may learn about mass media and communication, but do we learn how the media enforces gender stereotypes or how objectifying beauty ideals for women can be? How much of formal teaching time is devoted to dismantling socio-economic prejudices or destigmatising mental health?

Life experience and the culture of respectful and open encounter enrich us in a way pure academics does not. These means of informal education enable us to apply our siloed knowledge and skills in an integrated and interdisciplinary manner, in a way that brings out and highlights the nurturing aspects of the feminine. Fortunately, the pedagogy of the preventive system propagated by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians over the past one hundred and fifty years is geared exactly towards this: encounter, experience, faith, lovingkindness, a meeting of minds and hearts. This pedagogy primes us for an ecological conversion, both personal and at the community-level, as envisaged by the Holy Father in *Laudato Si'*. It is this profound ecological conversion that enables the actualisation of an integral ecology that recognises our interconnectedness and dependence on the intricate web of life and dialogues with our cultures, beliefs, ethnicities, societies, economies, technologies, politics for a true sustainable human and social development.

May our dialogues and discussions at this third session today be fruitful in discovering pathways that turn women's resources for education more holistic and more relevant to overcome the challenges of our times. Thank you very much.