



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Education for All

May 2021

Introduction

The outbreak of Covid-19 on a global level is a public health issue. However, it is also an educational turning point leading us to other ways of providing education and "pointing to another lifestyle," as *Laudato Si'* (LS, 203-208) calls us. The pandemic highlights many crises, including anthropological and ecological divisions. Many students were unable to continue their academic studies and/or apply their learnings to their current life challenges. Like Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, "we educate with the conviction that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons" (YAS, C 22). We need to network and use our human and technological ties to reach the most vulnerable children, adolescents and young people in our local communities "through assisting them to direct their gifts toward building the earth" (YAS, C 22).

Call to Prayer

God, source of all wisdom and knowledge, grant us the grace to welcome and prepare children, adolescents, and young people for ecological citizenship, leading them to a dignified and quality life. May our way of educating, according to the legacy of Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus, be sound and accurate, leading to greater justice and solidarity for those we serve.

Experience

Two views of how the pandemic altered education:

I am **Emília Viviane Ferreira Porffrio**, a 5th grade teacher in a private school in the city of Cajazeiras, located in the hinterland of Paraíba. With the end of traditional classroom education, I suddenly had to use technologies that were foreign to me. As a teacher, I overcame many barriers, like producing four videos a day and creating cartoons and avatars to assist my students in mastering their lessons. Besides all the professional challenges, I had to learn to deal with the fear, insecurity, and loneliness caused by isolation. What helped me go through all the challenges was the hope that comes from prayer, the support of colleagues, friends, family, and students' kindness. One, at the beginning of the pandemic, came to my house with a vase of flowers, saying: "Teacher, I brought you flowers so you will not feel alone." I still cultivate those flowers in my backyard as a reminder to me that one day all this will pass.

I am **Liziane Silva Hillesheim**, Pedagogical Coordinator of the Project for People with Disabilities Rumo Norte in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This project is characterized by diversity. We thought we were familiar with working in typical situations. With the pandemic, we faced a new world of challenges. The home office made us realize that we were not ready for the technology, nor was it prepared for us. We experienced different levels of exclusion, such as the lack of accessible platforms and events, equipment, internet plans, and family support. A social, educational institution like ours is used to looking outside, reading society, receiving what comes from it. The great learning of the pandemic is that we also need to look inside of ourselves. In addition to the incessant search for ways to continue offering free assistance to young people and adults with disabilities, we remain focused on being more united, better able to face the new world that appears. Step by step, with trial and error, we are progressing. Our

purpose of being fertile ground continues. Our seeds are diverse and bloom, and this is just another season.

Reflection

1. How are we educators in all that we are and do in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What experiences or learnings do I have in this time of isolation that I would like to share with the group/community? (Allow time for sharing reflections.)
3. Read “Educating for the alliance between humanity and the environment” in [LS, 209-211](#) and dialogue about: What “solid virtues” are we developing in ourselves in caring for all creatures in our common home?
4. What actions are we taking where we are to educate for “ecological citizenship” ([LS, 211](#))?

Action

1. Find out how much of the commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, “Quality Education for All,” has been accomplished in your country. You may consider compelling public authorities to fulfill the promises they made regarding quality education for all.
2. Support the [Global Education Compact](#) proposed by Pope Francis, which challenges all to educate for dignity and human rights, integral ecology from the point of view of *Laudato Si'*, peace and citizenship, solidarity and development.
3. The goal of the [UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network](#) is to build peace in the minds of children and young people. There are over 11,500 member schools in 182 countries working in support of international understanding, peace, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development, and quality education in practice. You may consider learning more about the network and incorporating its goals into your ministry or partnering with this network.

Closing Prayer

We pray the following by alternate sides.

All: O Divine Wisdom, at this critical moment in the sacred history of creation and humanity, we hear the desire to trust and dare.

- We assume attitudes of humility, to be learners and to be transformed.
- We seek in the Divine Trinity the theological meaning of living collaboratively.
- We build unity in diversity as a prophetic sign in the contemporary world.
- We broaden our understanding of interculturality and commit ourselves to develop intercultural living skills in society.
- We risk innovative responses as educators in a world of rapid change influenced by technology.
- We educate in collaboration with others for the dignity of life and the care of all creation.

All: We discern the urgent and critical concerns to address and, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, dare to respond courageously in unusual ways. Amen!