

World Catholic Education Day 2022



Responding to the Call from Pope Francis: Seven Commitments for a Global Compact on Education

Edited by Quentin Wodon

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Acknowledgment

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FOREWORD

Message from Pope Francis for the meeting with representatives of religions on the theme "Religions and Education: towards a Global Compact on Education" on October 5, 2021.

On World Teachers Day on October 5, 2021, Pope Francis and other religious leaders including Buddhist, Calvinist, Evangelical, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox, Quaker, and Sikh representatives met to discuss the idea of a Global Compact on Education. The Pope's address at the meeting is reproduced below.

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you on this significant occasion to promote a Global Compact on Education. On this World Teachers' Day instituted by UNESCO, we, as representatives of different religious traditions, wish to express our closeness and gratitude to teachers, and at the same time our concern for education.

Two years ago, on 12 September 2019, I appealed to all those engaged in various ways in the field of education to *"dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet and the need to employ the talents of all, since all change requires an educational process aimed at developing a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society"* (Message for the Launch of the Compact on Education).

For this reason, I promoted the initiative of a Global Compact on Education in order *"to rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding"*. I invited everyone *"to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity"*.

If we desire a more fraternal world, we need to educate young people *"to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives"* (Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, 1). The fundamental principle "Know yourself"

has always guided education. Yet we should not overlook other essential principles: "Know your brother or sister", in order to educate in welcoming others (cf. Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*; Document on Human Fraternity, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019); "Know creation", in order to educate in caring for our common home (cf. Encyclical *Laudato Si'*) and "Know the Transcendent", in order to educate in the great mystery of life. We are concerned to ensure an integral formation that can be summed up in knowledge of ourselves, our brothers and sisters, creation and the Transcendent. We cannot fail to speak to young people about the truths that give meaning to life.

Religions have always had a close relationship with education, accompanying religious activities with educational, scholastic and academic ones. As in the past, so also in our day, with the wisdom and humanity of our religious traditions, we want to be a stimulus for a renewed educational activity that can advance universal fraternity in our world.

If in the past, our differences set us at odds, nowadays we see in them the richness of different ways of coming to God and of educating young people for peaceful coexistence in mutual respect. For this reason, education commits us never to use God's name to justify violence and hatred towards other religious traditions, to condemn all forms of fanaticism and fundamentalism, and to defend the right of each individual to choose and act in accordance with his or her conscience.

If in the past, also in the name of religion, discrimination was practiced against ethnic, cultural, political and other minorities, today we want to be defenders of the identity and dignity of every individual and to teach young people to accept everyone without discrimination. For this reason, education commits us to accept people as they are, not how we want them to be, without judging or condemning anyone.

If in the past, the rights of women, children and the most vulnerable were not always respected, today we are committed firmly to defend those rights and to teach young people to be a voice for the voiceless. For this reason, education impels us to reject and denounce every violation of the physical and moral integrity of each individual. Education must make us realize that men and women are equal in dignity; there is no room for discrimination.

If in the past, we tolerated the exploitation and plundering of our common home, today, with greater awareness of our role as stewards of the creation entrusted to us by God, we want to give voice to the plea of nature for its survival, and to train ourselves and future generations in a more sober and ecologically sustainable lifestyle. Yesterday I was impressed by something that was said by one of the scientists at our meeting: *“My newborn granddaughter will have to live, in fifty years’ time, in an unlivable world, if things continue as they are”*. For this reason, education commits us to love our mother Earth, to avoid the waste of food and resources, and to share

more generously the goods that God has given us for the life of everyone. I think of what one thinker, not a Catholic, used to say: *“God always forgives, we occasionally forgive. Nature never forgives”*.

Today we want to state that our religious traditions, which have always played a leading role in schooling, from teaching literacy to higher education, reaffirm their mission of integrally educating each individual: head, hands, heart and soul. To think about what we are feeling and doing. To feel what we are thinking and doing. To do what we are feeling and thinking. The beauty and harmony of what it is to be fully human.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for taking part in this meeting. I also thank those who, due to the pandemic, could not be here today. And now I invite you to a brief moment of silence, asking God to enlighten our minds so that our dialogue will bear fruit and help us courageously to pursue the paths of new educational horizons.



Pope Francis and other religious and lay leaders attend the meeting, "Religions and Education: Toward a Global Compact on Education," at the Vatican Oct. 5, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media).

INTRODUCTION: CELEBRATING WORLD CATHOLIC EDUCATION DAY

Quentin Wodon

Catholic schools serve 62 million pre-primary, primary, and secondary school students globally, and close to seven million students enrolled in universities and other institutions of higher learning. While in some countries Catholic education is celebrated on a particular day or week, at the global level World Catholic Education Day is observed each year 40 days after Easter. The principle of observing the Day was agreed upon at a Congress of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC in French) in Brasilia in 2002. In 2021, for the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Day, the Global Catholic Education project prepared in collaboration with OIEC a series of resources that could be used by Catholic schools to celebrate the day all over the world. This included a series of 25 interviews of Catholic education leaders and practitioners.

This year again, resources are being made available for the celebration of the Day, including this report based on interviews with educators. The theme for this year's report is *"Responding to the Call from Pope Francis: Seven Commitments for a Global Compact on Education."* This focus comes from the fact that in September 2019, Pope Francis suggested the need for a Global Compact on Education to renew our passion for a more open and inclusive education. He called for a broad alliance *"to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity."*

A year later, in a video message for a meeting on the Global Compact, the Pope called for seven commitments related to the Global Compact on education: (1) to make human persons the center; (2) to listen to the voices of children and young people; (3) to advance the women; (4) to empower the family; (5) to welcome; (6) to find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics; and (7) to safeguard our common home.

To share examples of what educators are already doing to help implement the vision of Pope Francis, the first part of this report reproduces a text to be published (possibly with some minor changes) in the Spring 2022 issue of the *Journal of Global Catholicism*. The text builds on stories and insights from about 130 interviews conducted to date with educators for the Global Catholic Education project. Insights from those interviews are shared as they relate to each of the seven commitments called for by Pope Francis.

The second part of the report consists of seven interviews illustrating how Catholic educators and others are putting these commitments into practice. One interview is provided to illustrate each of the seven commitments.

The first interview with Sister María Antonieta García Carrizales from Peru is broad on the mission of Catholic schools. It illustrates how Catholic schools aim to fulfil the first commitment called for by Pope Francis, which is to make human persons the center.

The second interview with Sr. Antoinette Nneka Opara from the Africa Province of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus illustrates the second commitment, which is to listen to the voice of children and youth. Sr. Antoinette shares the example of a survey implemented in two schools for girls in Nigeria to understand the nature of violence in schools and how to end such violence. These online surveys were a unique approach to give voice to children in confidentiality.

The third interview with Sr. Mickerlyne Cadet in Haiti relates to the commitment in the Global Compact to advance the women. Sr. Mickerlyne belongs to the FMA congregation which runs schools and other institutions globally with a focus on educating girls. She currently heads a vocational school in Haiti that prepares young women for work in the hospitality industry.

The fourth interview is with Cathy Low, a permanent volunteer of the International Movement ATD Fourth World in Switzerland. Cathy talks among others about street libraries, and how building on the aspiration of parents for their children is essential to the fight against extreme poverty. The interview relates to the commitment under the Global Compact to empower the family. The International Fourth World Movement for which Cathy works has long argued that the family is the first line of defense against extreme poverty. In the realm of education as well, parents and siblings have an essential role to play for children to learn.

The fifth interview with Father René Micallef, SJ, in Rome is about the commitment to welcome under the Global Compact. Catholic schools must be inclusive. This applies to children with disabilities, those from minorities or other religions, as well as the poor. It also applies to refugees. Fr. René talks about the importance of education for refugees, a topic that is especially relevant today given the dramatic increase in the number of refugees globally.

The sixth commitment under the Global Compact is about finding new ways of understanding the economy and politics. The interview with Idesbald Nicaise, a Professor of Economics at KU Leuven, Belgium, illustrates how this can be done. That interview is part of a broader series of interviews with Catholic economists.

Finally, the seventh commitment is about care for the environment. The interview with Myriam Gesché, also from Belgium, explains an initiative taken to promote a better understanding among Catholic school students of the need to safeguard our common home, with a particular emphasis on the energy sector. That interview is part of a series on digitalization in education.

These interviews are illustrative of the efforts already made by educators all over the world to “live” the commitments suggested under the Global Compact on Education. Rather than attempting to summarize the interviews in this introduction, it seems best to simply highlight some of the key messages of the interviewees as outlined in excerpts from the interviews. Two excerpts from each interview are provided below, with the interviews listed according to the

seven commitments of the global compact. The hope is that the stories and interviews in this report will inspire you in your own work to implement the vision and seven commitments suggested by Pope Francis towards a Global Compact on Education.

**Sor María Antonieta
García Carrizales,
Presidenta del Consejo
de la CIEC, Péru**



“Tener el amparo del Concordato (Iglesia-Estado), favorece la existencia de las escuelas católicas en el Perú, cuya finalidad es la evangelización y obras de caridad. La escuela católica supone para las familias, no solamente una elección de valores culturales sino una elección de valores de vida que debemos hacer evidentes en cualquier circunstancia, buscando siempre servir al prójimo.”

“Estamos en momentos de pandemia y necesitamos profundizar en el desarrollo de la interioridad por el valor de la vida y fortalecer el espíritu de esperanza y trascendencia del ser y la certeza de que nuestras acciones deben estar orientadas a hacer el bien y todo lo demás será añadido.”

**Sr. Antoinette Nneka
Opara, Society of the
Holy Child Jesus,
African Province**



“Education is crucial; it is a fundamental human right. So, my worst nightmare is the children who do not get admitted into the schools. Africa is already notorious for too many out-of-school children, those who live either in rural areas with few educational facilities or in communities besieged by conflicts.”

“Fear of violence is widespread... To better understand what violence students were experiencing in school, I used an avenue (google form) that could provide anonymity to the students so that they would have the

freedom to express themselves and give me a clearer perspective on school discipline, disciplinary measures, violence and the result. I was interested in creating awareness...

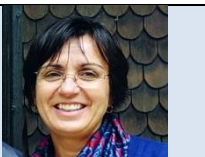
**Sœur Mickerlyne
Cadet, École Hôtelière
Marie Auxiliatrice,
Haïti**



« L'École Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice (EHMA) a pour objectif de former des techniciens de la restauration et de l'hôtellerie aptes à assumer avec responsabilité, compétence et honnêteté les différentes tâches dans la... Nos étudiants ont la compétence pour travailler dans n'importe quel hôtel au niveau national comme International. »

« Comme l'a dit notre Fondateur Saint Jean Bosco « Sans affection pas de confiance. Sans confiance, pas d'éducation. » Pour Jean Bosco, c'est seulement lorsque l'enfant ou le jeune prend conscience de son savoir-faire qu'il devient capable d'enrichir. »

**Cathy Low, Volunteer of
the International
Movement ATD Fourth
World, Switzerland**



“Father Wresinski’s core message engraved in the Trocadero in Paris [was that] “Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”

“We brought Sonia and the children to meet the President of the national council in Switzerland. They prepared intensively for this meeting. They talked about their life, what it meant to be separated from their family, growing up in poverty, and their dreams. Children and their words can change the world!”

**Father René Micallef SJ,
Associate Lecturer at
the Gregorian
University, Italy**



“Efforts focused on immediate needs that could evoke generosity when portrayed in a photo or short video... Yet refugees have little material capital (e.g. fertile agricultural land) and providing them with human capital and skills through education is the only viable way of helping them stand on their feet.”

“A holistic education of students about the current mass migration and asylum phenomena should weave together personal elements (encounters with the “stranger”), imaginative ones (art, movies), ethical and political reflection, as well as critical analysis of data from social science and economics.”

**Idesbald Nicaise,
Professor of
Economics at KU
Leuven, Belgium**



“Especially in the human sciences, research is always value-driven. The most ‘dangerous’ theoretical frameworks are those that claim to be neutral, disguised in mathematical models, without making their assumptions explicit.”

“For many years, I have felt like an outsider at university, frustrated by the terrible competition as well as the arrogance of some scientists. I kept doubting whether an academic career was my destiny. My friends convinced me that this was the way for me to follow my ideals. Today, I’m happy that I stayed.”

**Myriam Gesché,
Déléguée épiscopale
pour l'enseignement,
Belgique**



« En Belgique francophone, à l'instar d'autres pays, une Éducation à la Philosophie et à la Citoyenneté a été introduite dans l'ensemble cursus scolaire... Les responsables de deux disciplines [cours de religion et de géographie] ont décidé de créer ensemble un outil numérique qui permet de faire la jonction entre leurs cours ... en se centrant sur la problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique. »

« Il me semble que l'outil est novateur de quatre manières : en raison de sa forme numérique, de son contenu, de l'activité proposée aux élèves, et de l'accessibilité et des interactions que l'outil permet. »

About the Global Catholic Education Project

[Global Catholic Education](http://www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org) is a volunteer-led project to contribute to Catholic education and integral human development globally with a range of resources. The website went live symbolically on Thanksgiving Day in November 2020 to give thanks for the many blessings we have received. Our aim is to serve Catholic schools and universities, as well as other organizations contributing to integral human development, with a special emphasis on responding to the aspirations of the poor and vulnerable. If you would like to contribute to the project, please contact us through the website at www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org.

PART I

Responding to Pope Francis' Call for a Global Compact on Education: Insights from Interviews for the Global Catholic Education Project

Quentin Wodon

This text was written for publication (possibly with some edits) in the Spring 2022 issue of the [Journal of Global Catholicism](#) on the theme of Catholic education, and is reproduced here with permission from the journal's editorial team. The Journal of Global Catholicism is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal dedicated to fostering the understanding of diverse forms of lived Catholicism with attention to their significance for theoretical approaches within and across multiple academic disciplines. The Journal is part of the Catholics & Cultures initiative to explore the religious lives and practices of Catholics around the world. It is administered by the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J. Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA.



Introduction

The idea of a Global Compact on Education was first suggested by Pope Francis in September 2019. The Pope announced plans for a meeting to be held in May 2020 to *“rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education¹.”* He believed in the need *“to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity².”*

The meeting was postponed to October 2020 and held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In his video message for that virtual event, Pope Francis reminded us that *“to educate is always an act of hope, one that calls for cooperation in turning a barren and*

paralyzing indifference into another way of thinking that recognizes our interdependence... We consider education to be one of the most effective ways of making our world and history more human. Education is above all a matter of love and responsibility handed down from one generation to another³.” A year later in October 2021, in a meeting held at the Vatican with other religious leaders on World Teachers' Day, the Pope further noted that *“our religious traditions, which have always played a leading role in schooling, from teaching literacy to higher education, reaffirm their mission of integrally educating each individual: head, hands, heart and soul. [...] The beauty and harmony of what it is to be fully human.⁴”*

As part of the idea of a Global Compact on Education, the Pope has suggested a set of seven practical commitments for educators, communities, or even societies. These commitments were not related solely to education provided in formal settings: they referred broadly to *“every educational program, both formal and informal.”* The seven commitments suggested by the Pope to renew our vision for education were: (1) to make human persons the center; (2) to listen to the voices of children and young people; (3) to advance the women; (4) to empower the family; (5) to welcome; (6) to find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics; and (7) to safeguard our common home. These commitments are a call for action at the national, regional, and global levels, but they are also meant to guide the work of educators in their local communities. To inform this work, the Congregation for Catholic Education published a *Vademecum⁵* with for each of the seven commitments a brief explanation of what the commitment entails, ideas for reflection, and suggestions for action.

¹ Francis (2019).

² Ibid.

³ Francis (2020a).

⁴ Francis (2021).

⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education (2021).

While the idea of a Global Compact on Education is new, most of the commitments suggested by the Pope Francis are likely to be familiar to readers. They are inspired by themes discussed in the Pope's encyclicals (especially *Laudato Si'*⁶ and *Fratelli tutti'*). In several of his apostolic exhortations including *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Amoris Laetitia*, *Christus Vivit* and *Querida Amazonia*, and more broadly in a long tradition of Catholic social thought⁸.

Educators, Catholic or not, have already put these or similar commitments in practice all over the world in one way or the other. Sharing stories about those experiences can be helpful as challenges and opportunities faced by some can give ideas to others. To illustrate what educators can do to implement the vision set by Pope Francis for the Global Compact on Education, this article shares examples of actions based on interviews conducted with education practitioners and leaders as part of the Global Catholic Education (GCE) project. Most of the quotes included in the article come from these interviews, but occasionally other materials are used as well. All interviews are available individually on the GCE project website. In addition, interviews are combined into thematic compilations when enough interviews on a topic are available to draw some broader insights.

Seven compilations of interviews have been completed or are nearing completion to-date⁹. The first compilation was completed in March 2021 focused on projects supported by the International Catholic Child Bureau for reach children 'at risk'. This included children in poverty, but also those facing the criminal justice system and children with disabilities.

The second compilation was completed for World Catholic Education Day in May 2021. It is broader in terms of the themes it considers, but of note is a subset of interviews conducted with the Salesian Sisters of Saint John Bosco or FMA (*Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*) sisters who manage

a wide range of educational institutions especially for girls.

The third compilation was completed in June 2021 on Catholic education in Africa and the Middle East. It provides perspectives from national leaders and is especially relevant for efforts to welcome children from all faiths in countries where Catholics are a minority.

The fourth compilation was completed in July 2021 with Catholic economists working in North America. It provides insights into how teachers and researchers live and practice their faith in their professional roles ((a separate collection is underway for other regions of the world).

The fifth compilation was completed in February 2022 on research in service of Catholic education practice. It consists of interviews about the influential work of Gerald Grace who recently retired from St. Mary's University in Twickenham, London.

The last two compilations were completed in May 2022, respectively on the dialogue between philosophy, theology, and science with winners of the Expanded Reason Awards, and on some of challenges and opportunities emerging from digitalization in education. Other compilations are being prepared, and completed interviews not yet included in a compilation are available online.

The structure of this article follows the seven commitments outlined by Pope Francis for the Global Compact on Education, with one section devoted to each commitment. A brief conclusion follows.

1- To make human persons the center

In the *Vademecum* for the Global Compact, "to make human persons the center of every educational program, in order to foster their distinctiveness and their capacity for relationship with others against the spread of the throwaway culture", the Congregation for Catholic Education emphasizes the importance of an anthropological foundation for the vision of the person that informs education. The Congregation also notes the importance of the

⁶ Francis (2015).

⁷ Francis (2020b).

⁸ For an analysis of Pope Francis' conception of the role of education, see Klein (2021).

⁹ Wodon (2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2022a, 2022b, and 2022c).

Charter of Universal Human Rights¹⁰ and emphasizes the need to pay special attention to the most fragile. It further notes that integral formation should include attention to the spiritual dimension of the human person.

The mission of Catholic schools and universities is clearly articulated by the researchers interviewed for the compilation of interviews in honor of Gerald Grace from St. Mary's University. As Gerald Grace himself explains it, *"Catholic schools are committed to forming young people in spiritual, moral and social ways, understanding the importance of working for the common good and for helping to build a better world. There are many research issues raised here."* However, he also notes that *"In many countries, the commitment to education for the poor is not being realized effectively because of school budget problems... More research [is needed] not only into why this is happening but also, what new approaches ... can begin to change this situation."*

Father Cristobal Madero, SJ, notes that *"the work of Gerald Grace is fundamental for approaching the tension between Catholic schools benefiting from the rules of the market and at the same time risking their identity because of that."* He adds that *"to be meaningful and helpful, Catholic schools in today's society need to have ministers, teachers, and leaders who conceive of the school and its role not only as a creator of social, economic, or cultural capital, but who also serve as mentors of spiritual capital."* John Lydon, Gerald Grace's colleague at St. Mary's University agrees: *"the concept of 'spiritual capital', defined... as 'resources of faith derived from a religious tradition', in my opinion, represents one of Professor Grace's main contributions to research in Catholic education."*

In the curriculum of many Catholic schools, religious and moral education is one of the ways through which teachers explain to students the vision of the person held by the Church. How this can be done in schools that welcome students from many faiths will be discussed later, but a particular finding that emerges from interviews conducted under the GCE project is

worth mentioning. There is a need to better train teachers and principals so that they are indeed able to share this vision of the person with students. This is not a theoretical exercise. As noted by Sister Josephine Garza, FMA, the principal of a school in Manila in the Philippines, *"there is a need to strengthen in the religious education program ... conscience and character formation and ... commitment as active citizens... Many times, students have their heads filled with the doctrines of the faith, but their hearts and their hands remain underdeveloped... The faith they believe in is detached from the life they actually live... Modelling service and community and parish involvement ... becomes a strong lesson that teach the young about the school's commitment ... to promote justice and peace, care for creation."*

The Congregation for Catholic Education calls for paying special attention to the most fragile. Centers for literacy (*Centres pour l'alphabétisation*) were created in Djibouti to serve children who were not in school and were too old to start primary school. The Centers also welcome orphans, refugees, and children living in the street. As noted by Simone Pire, the Head of Catholic schools, a focused curriculum enables them over a period of three years to learn or improve their French and, if they are not too old, take the state examination to pursue their education further. Some have gone all the way to the university. The most fragile also includes children with disabilities. A milestone was the opening of the School for All (*école pour tous*) to welcome some of these children. David lacked motor skills and used to not talk, or would yell if upset. After one month in the school, he was able to use a pencil for the first time. He started to sing, learned the alphabet, and joined the classroom during mornings, while working on his motor skills in the afternoon. As his mother recounted, *"he successfully integrated into the 1st year class. He no longer has shifty eyes and he understands the instructions. He is no longer rowdy – the screaming has really diminished... He points to objects. He manages ... to follow rhythms. David knows how to dance!!! ... I would like through this testimony to pay a vibrant tribute to all the supervisory staff: the sisters, the mistresses. With very little means, they manage to satisfy our children. And the results are there. The fight goes on!"*

¹⁰ This refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Finding ways to welcome children with disability will take time, but pilot initiatives are showing the way. In Burkina Faso, Father Hubert Kiemde, the Secretary General of Catholic Schools explains that for a decade, some schools have started to welcome students who are blind or deaf: *“These are enormous challenges, but we are committed to also going to this existential periphery and really opening our schools to children from all walks of life. People living with a disability are really left behind and this should challenge us. We are happy to have given or give this school education to more than 300 children to date.”*

The emphasis placed by the Congregation for Catholic Education on the most fragile echoes the preferential option for the poor. Apart from the scourge of income poverty, we also face a learning crisis. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, more than one in two children in low- and middle-income countries were learning poor according to the World Bank. This means that they were not able to read and understand a simple text by age 10. Making human persons the center requires teachers to ensure that children learn in school. A great role model is Brother Peter Tabichi, a Franciscan science teacher in a public school in Kenya who won the Global Teacher Prize. Asked about how he taught in practice, he responded: *“it is all about having confidence in the student. Every child has potential, a gift or a talent. I try to engage students in various activities and mentor them. It is not a matter of telling them “do this” and then walking away. You need to work with them closely...”* Public schools in Kenya have limited resources, but Brother Peter is creative: *“Unfortunately, in my school we have only one desktop computer and one projector. So, wherever I go, I usually carry my phone to take pictures to illustrate what I am teaching by projecting those images with my laptop in school... Suppose I go to the hospital and I see an X-ray machine. I am able to take a photo that I can then use when I teach the students about X-rays and physics. You also need to improvise.”*

In the sciences as in many other fields, there is often no better way to learn than by doing, but this requires again imagination when resources are scarce. As Brother Peter explains: *“Materials*

are very expensive for practicums. So, I improvised picking up materials from surroundings. If I am talking about resistance, I can show a radio or another electrical gadget and explain how it is working, or not working. So that students can appreciate how resistances work in practice. This avoids learning to become too abstract or conceptual... When I was teaching about friction, I brought a match box... The matches will light with friction, but not without. When I applied paraffin or oil to the matchbox, it did not work anymore. Students can learn from these simple examples.”

According to the scientific literature, one of the ways to improve student learning in the early grades is to teach in the students' native language. In some countries, Catholic educators influenced government policy. Gilberte Chung Kim Chung, the Executive Director of Catholic Education in Mauritius, notes that advocacy helped in the adoption of two important policies: *“(1) The recognition of prevocational schools by the Government in 2005, after our intense advocacy and showing by doing, that children whom the system failed can learn and can achieve - today, these students are in the extended stream of mainstream schools; (2) The recognition of our mother-tongue, Kreol Morisien, as a subject in the school curriculum by showcasing results of our action and research in the area during a period of 7 years.... Both examples above are linked because language is an issue. It is difficult for children aged 5 years old to learn all their subjects from books written in English (because English is our official language) when their mother-tongue is Kreol Morisien and they hear a lot of French in the media.”*

Making human persons the center also means ensuring that schools are safe. Violence in schools remains widespread, including in Catholic schools. In particular, the Church needs to come to terms with sexual abuse by priests and other staff. Father Hans Zollner, SJ, a Professor at the Gregorian University and the President of the Centre for Child Protection, argues that being effective in protecting children from abuse requires not only knowledge, but also *“a deeply felt mission to do everything possible to protect those who are most vulnerable”*. While much more remains to be done, progress is being made as *“[the] summit*

on the protection of minors held in the Vatican brought concrete changes: norms on accountability of bishops..., greater involvement of the laity ... A Vademecum was published, detailing procedural issues... I have seen a very strong push ... to create safe spaces for children... Not only has the Church started to confront the reality that abuse of minors has been happening, but members are also dealing with... cover-up... It is an ongoing process, a commitment... to bring about deep long-lasting change and healing... Prevention of abuse... [must] involve the entire ecclesial community – not just a few experts.”

2- To listen to the voices of children and young people

Regarding the commitment *“to listen to the voices of children and young people in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person”*, the Vademecum for the Global Compact empathizes the need to start by listening, noting that in Latin ‘e-ducere’ means *“to bring out, to bring to light, to prepare the good soil, preparing it to welcome the seed of knowledge.”* Educators are encouraged to empower students and young people, including through advisory and decision-making capacities in schools and other learning institutions.

The International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC in French), one of the international organizations that supported the launch of the GCE Project, launched several initiatives to give a voice to children and enable them to learn from each other across nations. One of these projects is I Can! As Juan Antonio Ojeda Ortiz, FSC, explains, *“the program helps children ... identify ... problems in their own context and build appropriate solutions as a team.. in four ... steps: 1. Feel: Enable children to feel and identify a problem within their concrete realities; 2. Imagine: Help children consider potential solutions and choose one that [...is] viable, meaningful and with lasting potential; 3. Do: Act together with others and create change projects that contribute to improving the local and global contexts; and 4. Share: Tell stories of change with others to inspire them and create a worldwide chain of children and youth engaged in millions of small actions that change the world.”* Thousands of children from over 40

countries attended a 2019 summit in Rome around the project inspired by *Laudato Si’*.

Another initiative launched by OIEC is the Planet Fraternity Project. The project proposes to young people to work directly and hand in hand with a partner school from another country on themes related to *Fratelli Tutti*, *Laudato Si’*, the Global Compact on Education, and the United Nations’ sustainable development goals. Work is done in English, which helps participating students who are not native speakers to improve their language skills. As explained by Hervé Lecomte, *“Planet Fraternity allows students and educational teams in Catholic schools all over the world to create bonds of fraternity. The project provides a range of online resources created by education professionals to build commitment towards safeguarding our common home and building fraternal humanism.”* Within a few months, close to 2,400 students were participating from 15 different countries.

Documentaries are another way to give a voice to children and youth and tell their stories. Véronique Brossier of the International Catholic Child Bureau manages Children in the World (*Enfances dans le Monde*), a movie festival organized each year for World Children's Day. Choosing documentaries means *“choosing to show reality, however difficult it may be, in order to raise awareness and ... make people want to act... The festival ...is aimed at middle and high school students during the day and the general public in the evening. Round tables and meetings with directors, experts, [and] witnesses are also organized ... [for] exchange and debate... Students ... award ... the Youth Prize to one of the films.”* The team avoids documentaries with intrusive situations or staged settings. It aims for diversity in themes and regions of the world represented and it provides educational information for each film. *“This is much appreciated by teachers to prepare students...”* The core idea is that *“it is important to start from the reality of what children experience, through their stories, their difficulties, their projects, anecdotes... It is these testimonies, these faces that are most likely to touch the public and make them want to get involved.”*

The call by Pope Francis to listen to the voices of children and young people is not abstract. It

has a specific goal, which is *“to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.”* Multiple initiatives give opportunities to children and youth to do just that. In France, iniSia is a program for Catholic schools to act in solidarity with schools abroad. More than 250 schools have applied for small grants, with 52 schools being awarded funding. A technical school from Orléans supported helped build a vegetable garden in Madagascar that is self-powered with electricity and irrigation thanks to solar panels and hydroelectric dams. Today, the farm works independently and is run by a Malagasy association. A school in Tours created a two-hour module once a week on development and solidarity issues. Participants met with migrants, and a small group travelled to Togo. In Mulhouse, the project ‘Ecuador 2020: trees for living!’ to raise awareness about reforestation and sustainable development issues. As Louis Marie Piron and Marie Lopez explained, *“our approach is not to develop a top down solidarity or we would decide what is good for our partners in southern countries. We first seek to build a real relationship with our partners to choose together what we are going to achieve. We picture solidarity as two parts of the same frame, ... one cannot move without moving the other.”*

The Vademecum for the Global Compact also emphasizes the need to condemn all forms of disrespect and exploitation as one core component of listening to the voices of children and young people. In South Africa, the Building Peaceful Schools program contributes to a climate of justice and peace in schools through an understanding of restorative justice. Anne Baker, Deputy Director of the Catholic Institute for Education, suggests that the program helps *“promotes communication, conflict management and restorative practices. Thus it aims to enable the Catholic ethos of deep respect, care and a safe environment to grow.”*

3- To advance the women

The third commitment for the Global Compact on Education is *“to encourage the full participation of girls and young women in education.”* The Vademecum notes that young girls and women are often marginalized by education and society. Suggestions for educators include encouraging girls’ education

and ensuring equal participation for women in schools, including for leadership position, while also condemning all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

Women congregations have long played an essential role in efforts by the Church to promote girls’ education. The largest of those congregations is the Salesian Sisters of Saint John Bosco, more formally known as the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (*Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice* in Italian, abbreviated FMA). The congregation was founded in 1872 and will soon celebrate its 150th anniversary. Today, more than 11,500 FMA sisters work in 97 countries on five continents. Thoughts from Sister Josephine Garza, FMA, the principal of a school in Manila, were shared earlier on the importance of religious and moral education grounded in a practical commitment to social justice. But beyond a large number of traditional schools and universities, FMA sisters are also involved in other types of programs benefiting girls and women. Two examples are mentioned here.

Sister Joséphine Chulu, FMA, is the Director of the Laura Vicuña Center in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Laura del Carmen Vicuña Pino was a child in Chile who died at the age of 14. She was beatified and is considered the patron of abuse victims, having experienced abuse herself. The Center in the DRC was transferred to FMA sisters by the Provincial Government of Haut-Katanga in 2020 because of the expertise of the sisters in running this type of institution. The Center welcomes youth in situations of family breakdown, starting with children as young as 12. A major emphasis of the Center is to equip youth with the skills they need in the labor market. As Sister Joséphine explains, *“before, vocational schools tended only towards cutting and sewing, but for the moment, there are more or less innovative sectors here. We have the agro-food, conservation, hotel and catering, bakery and pastry, aesthetics, childcare section. We have initiated textile and agricultural cooperatives for the development of young women to lift them out of poverty by making them responsible and promoting in them the spirit of entrepreneurship, teamwork and cooperative learning.”*

In the Philippines, Sister Maria Victoria P. Sta. Ana, FMA, is Director of the Laura Vicuña Foundation (LVF) and in particular it holistic multi-staged center and community based program called the Journey of Hope. As Sister Maria explains, *“as a hands-on 24/7 nurturing mother of 20 to 30 sexually abused and exploited girls at a time, I have accompanied these deeply scarred girls transition, from childhood to adolescence to young adults and help them heal from their trauma with psycho-social spiritual interventions then guide them to blossom into women who can fully function in building their families and society.”* Sister Maria also launched a Child Protection Clinic on Wheels to bring services against child abuse, exploitation, and trafficking in high-risk urban poor communities. The Clinic *“currently aids nearly 2,000 children on average. We have also expanded our reach to 16,000 children per year with our Social Workers and Youth leaders championing child protection advocacies in public schools and highly vulnerable communities, either face to face or virtual during this pandemic.”*

4- To empower the family

The Vademecum for the Global Compact considers *“the family as the first and essential place of education.”* This is a principle that has long been held by the Church, with *Gravissimum educationis* clearly stating that parents are the primary and principal educators of their children. Suggestions for educators including involving families in educational activities and ensuring their representation in advisory and decision-making bodies, while also encouraging training for parents.

One organization that has forcefully advocated for the role of the family in efforts to reduce extreme poverty is the International Movement ATD Fourth World. The Movement was founded by Father Joseph Wresinski, but is inter-denominational. Cathy Low, a member of its volunteer corps, explains that *“our main purpose is to stay close to very poor families... These families are hard to reach ... very dependent on institutions and suffer a lot about it... [One] couple has four children and is on welfare. The parents are illiterate... Social services... put the children into foster care... Although I could understand the concerns of the institutions, the*

voices of the parents were not really respected during the whole process and the parents were not considered as partners in the upbringing of their children... One of the main sources of suffering expressed by people living in poverty is to be denied to right to act by themselves, to be disempowered.” Cathy ran for many years so-called street libraries which bring books and the love of reading to families in extreme poverty where they live. This is a great example of a family-focused program reaching the poor.

Supporting families in the education of their children must start at a young age. One of the organizations supported by the International Catholic Child Bureau is AINA Trust, which operates in the state of Karnataka in India, serving disadvantaged children, many of whom are from single parents living in slums. The trust runs more than 70 small early child care centers for slum-dwellers and rag-picker families, with each center enrolling five children. As Mary Chelladurai explains, *“the [centers] provide childcare, welfare and development. We ensure that children are handled with care and dignity. Their parents are taught to respect their children and their rights, and to provide a child-friendly environment. AINA does not differentiate between children or families based on cultural or religious identities. Poverty defines target groups for interventions.”*

For older children, many schools rediscovered the role of the family in the education of children during the COVID-19 pandemic. David Brandán, Director of an FMA school in Argentina, puts it poetically, *“in some educational spaces, daily life could be illustrated as a deep sea: immense, moving, dynamic, vital. [With] the pandemic ... the sea retreats, moves away, and we can see what is deep, we could see if we had stones, or soft sand, corals or pollution. It was a great revelation... It was the family who ... made a new alliance with the school in a reciprocal attitude of community and fraternal work... The school was and continues to be part of the family life of each student... Without this ... relationship, pedagogical continuity could not have been sustained... Educators... [had to] walk as in Emmaus with the students and their families.”*

Sister Josephine from the Philippines was mentioned earlier. She runs for her school a

Family Ministry program to ensure that families are included in the work of the school. Annual Family camps are also organized. Formation activities and initiatives empower families to respond to the issues and realities affecting them. Families helped draft *Laudato Si'* commitments that include planting mangrove and providing training on urban farming and gardening. As Sister Josephine explained, *"all these, I believe, promote the education and development of the girls and boys we serve because, aside from learning these in our schools, parents are empowered to take on their role as the primary educators of their children and our main collaborators in our work of educations."*

Families with children with disabilities face particular challenges to educate their children. Perspektivy in Russia is another organization supported by the International Catholic Child Bureau. It runs daycare centers in St. Petersburg, a Crisis Service Center, and a Guest House, while also helping schools welcome children with disabilities. Through support to families, the goal is to enable individuals with severe disabilities to have a normal life and prevent social orphanhood. As Svetlana Mamonova from Perspektivy put it, *"a child with severe developmental disabilities should be able to attend kindergarten or school... After graduation from school, when a person begins her adult life, s/he should be able to attend day care centers and workshops... S/he should also be able to have some form of employment. S/he should also have the opportunity to live in a family or an accompanying residence. Any person, regardless of their developmental problems, should have a normal childhood, adolescence, and adulthood."*

5- To welcome

The fifth commitment called for by Pope Francis for the Global Compact is *"to educate and be educated on the need for acceptance and in particular, openness to the most vulnerable and marginalized."* Apart from the need to ensure quality education for vulnerable children, the Vademecum of the Congregation for Catholic Education also encourages intercultural and interreligious perspectives and cooperation programs aiming to build a more fraternal world.

Catholic schools operate in most countries of the world, including in countries where only a small proportion of the population is Catholic. This is the case in many countries in Africa and the Middle East. Several interviews with national Secretaries or Directors of Catholic education provide their perspective on serving mostly children who are not Catholic. In Lebanon Father Butros Azar explains that *"it is a tradition and it is even a request of many Muslim families to educate their children in our schools. All children thus benefit from an education in pluralism, a historical characteristic of Lebanon, and in human fraternity... A citizenship education is forged in our schools, based on a common set of values, foremost among which are the social values of mutual aid and solidarity."*

In Mali, Koundya Joseph Guindo notes that *"non-Catholic students represent approximately 80 percent of all students in Catholic schools. The time that non-Catholic students spend in Catholic schools allows many of them to understand Christian values and to put them into practice through their witness of life. Many non-Catholic former students who attended Catholic schools and who outnumber Christians in State decision-making bodies defend the cause of the Church in general and of Catholic education in particular and advocate the spirit of secularism and tolerance. These facts constitute an immense wealth for Mali because they promote cohesion and peaceful living together."*

In Morocco, the proportion of Muslim students in Catholic schools is even higher according to Father Marc Boucrot since *"nearly 98 percent of our students are Moroccan Muslims... At the level of their management, we have both heads of Catholic establishments and other Muslims. Our educational project was drawn up jointly between Catholic and Muslim directions. It is a project that is inspired by Gospel values but on which Muslims can also find themselves and it is an opportunity to be able to work together... on a common educational work."*

In Burkina Faso, Father Hubert Kiemde estimates that two thirds of students are Catholic, with most other students being Muslims. He considers this as beneficial for the schools: *"The presence of non-Catholic children in our schools is one of the characteristics and*

values recognized by all (Christians and non-Christians) since the foundation of the first schools by the missionaries. It is for us the sign of our 'Catholicity', that is to say our openness to all, and our universal spirit of welcome... It is the proof of a culture of living together and an apprenticeship of fraternity beyond religious affiliations, for mutual knowledge and a culture of acceptance... (letting go of certain prejudices)."

In Palestine, four in ten students in Catholic schools are Christian, but the proportion is at less than 10 percent in Gaza. In a similar vein to what others said, Father Jamal Khader argues that *"the presence of Christians and Muslims makes it possible to discover common values and to live from childhood in an atmosphere of equality and fraternity. When the catechist asked the Christian children to do the Lenten collection in favor of the poor, the Muslim children insisted on taking part...; all were very happy to share with the poorest of the community. Coexistence is experienced and practiced in daily life at school. When I once entered a class, I asked the students (17 years old): who is Christian and who is Muslim? And I added right away: I don't know, and I don't want to know. You are all our children, our students. I later discovered that among these students was President Arafat's great niece! It didn't change anything."*

A similar view is again expressed by Father Jawad Alamat for Tunisia: *"the students and staff of our schools are Muslim; we follow Tunisian state programs, including Islamic religious education; the Christian presence, provided by the religious communities in charge of the school, is at the level of direction, management and support. Consequently, Catholic students are very rare; in any case, their presence testifies to the existence and value of diversity, even at the level of religion, and thereby contributes to open-mindedness."*

In Benin, Father Didier Affobali mentions an interesting anecdote on support to schools by alumni who are not Catholic: *"our Catholic school structures welcome children from all religious denominations or not. And this constitutes a richness in the sense that living together does not constitute any handicap for the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the learners. On the contrary, some students*

who have finished their schooling or their academic career and who are in the public service in the country or elsewhere, whether Catholic or not, sometimes form an association to help their schools of origin."

Finally, Father Alexandre Bingo in Burkina Faso has been experimenting with creative ways for Christian and Muslim students to support each other. One initiative is a religious education course that covers the main religions practiced in the country (Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religion) as well as other religions around the world. Local faith representatives are invited to share their experience of faith in the service of living together. In addition, an inter-religious dialogue committee called *balimaya* is set up with students from each grade to organize festivals and religious events. For example, *"during Christian holidays, 'balimaya' goes to greet some families of Christian students. It is the same for Muslim holidays or traditional religion. The committee is present both during happy events (holidays, baptisms, traditional festive funerals) and unfortunate events (deaths, painful events). At the beginning of Christian Lent or Muslim fasting, a message is written by the committee and sent to Christians or Muslims to wish them a good time of Lent or Muslim fasting. The message is read in the presence of all the students when the colors rise. The atmosphere of conviviality and mutual respect despite the differences of religion that reigns within the establishment is undoubtedly the observable fruit of this school of faith."*

While these various examples illustrate how Catholic schools aim to welcome children from all faiths, another focus is an emphasis on making schools affordable for the poor. In Mauritius, Gilberte Chung Kim Chung notes that *"we embraced the free education system and clearly stated in our admission policy a preferential option for the poor in the year 2000... There are some warning signals of a decline in interest for Catholic secondary schools by families, both Catholics and of other faiths, who are 'results-oriented' and do not want their children to learn with children of lesser academic abilities. But we consciously made the choice of having our 'five-star' schools which were in very high demand become schools with mixed abilities, inclusive of those children who*

had failed in the system. We chose social mobility for those who had lesser opportunities.”

In the Philippines, Sister Josephine who was mentioned earlier notes that Catholic education is often accessible only to those who can pay tuition. But programs have been put in place to increase access for the poor. One initiative targets boys and girls 18 years and older who did not complete high school. They can enroll for free in the REACH Ed program (Rekindling A Child’s Hope Through Education). As Sister Josephine explains, *“with the help of volunteer teachers..., staff, parents and senior high school students, boys and girls in R.E.A.C.H. Ed prepare for the equivalency and placement examination given by the Department of Education which, when passed, will give them eligibility to pursue higher education or take on ... employment or entrepreneurship with better educational qualifications.”* As for the school as a whole, it also aims to *“involve the parents, students and teachers in activities that will increase the school’s capacity to welcome and help the poor. In addition, formation is always geared towards sensitizing the families who make up the school as well as our lay mission partners to their duty, as members of a catholic school community, to share their resources and support programs that uplift the quality of life and nurture the dignity of those who are poor and marginalized.”*

Another category of children that Catholic schools have tried to reach is refugees. In Lebanon, the Fratelli project serves more than 1,000 refugees from Syria, Irak, and Palestine as well as vulnerable Lebanese children. This is done through centers operating in Rmeileh and Bourj Hammoud. As explained by Rana El Khoury, *“we have premises consisting of a ‘model’ socio-educational space which includes sports fields, lessons for early childhood, young people and adults, outdoor games, gardens, work rooms, equipped and secure spaces , all this for the implementation of programs covering educational, sports and psychosocial activities. Each time we end up with a positive transformation in the lives of children, young people and women. We realize how much these projects bring strength, hope, to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable people.”*

In South Africa, Anne Baker, who was already mentioned before, talked about an interesting initiative in a local Marist school to serve refugee children who may not be able to enroll in the normal primary school programs: *“[The innovation is] called ‘3 to 6’. It has enabled many children who cannot get into South African schools to still get a primary school education. A normal school opens its classrooms from 3 o’clock to 6 o’clock for these children.”*

Efforts to serve refugees are important not only because the number of refugees is increasing in the world, but also because education plays a key role in their future. As noted by Father René Micallef, SJ, from the Gregorian University, providing quality education to refugees is especially important because they often have no other resources on which to build a livelihood: *“refugees have little material capital (e.g. fertile agricultural land) and providing them with human capital and skills through education is the only viable way of helping them stand on their two feet and not become dependent on aid for generations.”* Father René also notes that *“education also prepares them to return to their country when the persecution or conflict is over with the skills needed to support themselves and to build healthier institutions and a vibrant civil society, capable of unrooting the evils that created the refugee situation in the first place, so to avoid new cycles of violence and oppression that may cause new cycles of flight.”*

6- To find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics

The sixth commitment relates to *“finding new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth, and progress that can truly stand at the service of the human person and the entire human family, within the context of an integral ecology.”* This is a broad agenda, but the *Vademecum* also calls for a social covenant for the common good. As a start, schools should integrate values such as participation, democracy, justice, equality, fraternity, and peace in the curriculum.

Several interviews are relevant for this commitment and the role that education can play. This includes insights from the interviews with Catholic economists and with the winners of the Expanded Research Awards. Consider first

what some of the Catholic economists who were interviewed shared. Education is essential for individuals and families to be able to avoid poverty or emerge from it. Maria Marta Ferreyra at the World Bank explains that *“Education is the only hope that most people in the world have for social mobility. The day laborer in rural Mexico, the street vendor in Colombia, and the maid in Chile all have one thing in common – they desperately want something better for their children and firmly believe that education is the only way out of poverty.”*

Education and economics are also essential to understand and interpret how the world works, or perhaps could work, beyond simple facts. Clara Jace, then at the Catholic University of America and now at Samford University, explains that *“the ‘facts’ of economics don’t speak for themselves any more than the data ‘speaks for itself.’ We use our values to identify and adjudicate between costs and benefits. Toward this end, I ask students to write reflection papers each week where they work through their own analysis of the tradeoffs.”*

There is a role for Catholic economists to help inform the views of the Church and vice versa. As Joseph Kaboski from the University of Notre Dame puts it: *“We need to foster the dissemination of nonideological and legitimate economic knowledge within Church conversations of the economy. At the same time, we need to help baptize the secular discipline of economics with Catholic values. Most economists, even practicing Catholics, don’t have an appreciation of Catholic social doctrine.”* Several Catholic economists interviewed found ways to support the work of the Church, including by serving as representatives, which can lead to funny situations as Charles Clark from St. John’s University recalls: *“[For an intervention of] the Holy See Permanent Mission to the United Nations, ... I was nervous. I heard the Chair announce: ‘We will now hear from the representative of the Holy Spirit’ (instead of Holy See, what the Vatican is called at the United Nations). Not surprisingly the mistake drew a lot of laughter. When it died down, I thanked the chair for the promotion, and proceeded to read.”*

Many Catholic economists work on topics that matter for the less fortunate and social justice.

As Ademar Bechtold from Notre Dame of Maryland University put it: *“I am passionate about education as a tool to grow economies and improve the standard of living around the world. Millions of good ideas that could solve major problems and challenges facing the world today may be lost forever when children cannot go to school.”* Or as Camila Morales from the University of Texas at Dallas shared, *“My research is largely motivated by my own lived experience. I moved to the US with my family when I was a teenager. I spoke little to no English and attended school in one of the poorest counties in the Metro Atlanta area. So, I enjoy working on topics that can help divulge a better understanding of the experiences of immigrant children and young adults.”*

Eric Scorsone from Michigan State University explains that: *“My values impact the type of research I work on and how I teach. I am interested in doing work on issues that impact local communities and in particular marginalized communities. I am very drawn to the teaching of Pope Francis and wish to emulate the kinds of issues he emphasizes... I reach out and work with local public officials in communities where economic and social distress is widespread.”* In a slightly gruesome anecdote, Bernhard Gunter at American University suggests that this commitment to social justice often starts at a young age: *“I have always been passionate about fairness and justice. When I was about six years old, I went to my aunt asking her for a kitchen knife and a cutting board. Obviously, she asked me for what. My explanation was that one of their two cats had caught a mouse. I needed the knife to cut the already dead mouse in two to make sure that both cats got their fair share of the ‘jointly owned’ mouse!”*

Finally, in economics as in other social sciences, it is important to recall that research may not be value free. As Robert Whaples from Wake Forest University reminds us, *“I believe that all scholars’ values affect their research. How could they not? They guide every decision we make. Economics is all about weighing costs and benefits in making decisions. Moral values are about what we consider to be costs and what we consider to be benefits.”*

Beyond economics, Catholic philosophy and theology should enter in dialogue with science.

This is the premise of the Expanded Research Awards which “*seek to humanize the sciences by returning to a deeper understanding of the purpose of science, technology and professional work through a dialogue with philosophy and/or theology; to understand the sciences as human efforts at the service of society and the common good,*” according to Max Bonilla from the Expanded Reason Institute at University Francisco de Vitoria.

Interviews with recipients of the awards show how this dialogue is taking place in many areas. For Robert Enright from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, one such area is a better understanding of forgiveness: “*I began to ask myself: What in the area of moral development might make a major impact on the lives of adults and children, families, and communities? The idea of forgiveness kept coming up for me. Forgiveness occurs when people are treated unfairly by others. Might forgiveness be a way of people working their way out of resentment and hatred to reclaim their psychological well-being?*”

A focus on ethics is natural for Catholic social thought, but ethical considerations must be made palatable to the professions, including for engineers. This was the goal of Gonzalo Génova and Maria del Rosario González in courses that they created at Complutense University of Madrid: “*Ethics is often presented as a brake, a barrier, a series of annoying limits and prohibitions. But we are convinced that ethics is not the brake, but the real engine of technological progress... We share the view that the teaching of professional ethics has to be completely founded on ethical rationality, with our feet grounded in concrete practice and in the mental and vocational form of each profession. Otherwise, they will be overlapping schemes and not committed professional lives.*”

An ethical life is also a life of character, with James Arthur from the University of Birmingham sharing an interesting anecdote: “*A recent story was when I met the Queen who awarded me the title Officer of the British Empire – she asked me ‘How does one measure character?’ – I responded, ‘Your Majesty, one does not measure character, one recognizes it.’ She was amused!*”

It was mentioned earlier that there is a need for a dialogue between Catholic economists and the Church. The same point is made John Slattery from the American Association for the Advancement of Science about the Science for Seminaries that he leads: “*The idea for the project was simple: how can we help religious leaders better understand modern science, and how can we do it in a way that affirms a healthy dialogue between and among scientific and religious communities? Because there were so many examples of unhealthy science engagement with faith communities, a proper engagement ... was imperative... ‘The world will always need people who can articulate a clear sense of Catholic thought... No one knows what scholarly work will look like in 50 years, but we will always need interpreters of tradition, and we will always need scholars!’*”

One of the practical issues for Catholic education related to economics and politics is whether there is a social covenant whereby countries support education pluralism so that parents can choose the type of education their children receive. A major constraint faced by Catholic schools in many countries is a lack of (or insufficient) state funding. Father Hubert from Burkina Faso notes that for Catholic schools, “*the greatest risk is the loss of support in the funding of our schools. Families cannot pay enough to cover the running costs of schools and establishments. We count on the contribution of the State. However, the State itself is under pressure to lower its subsidy to Catholic schools. With the frequent cash flow tensions, the risk of a decline in state support exists. The State also assists destitute students by assigning students to private... establishments to which it pays part of the school fees... These two forms of state support enabled many of our establishments to have sufficient staff. [But] a drop in this support will cause more operational difficulties for establishments in poor areas.*”

When asked the same question, Father Didier’s response for Benin was even more concerned: “*in terms of opportunities, there are practically none, especially since there is no substantial aid from the State. The lack of financial resources sometimes handicaps the proper functioning of Catholic education. Teachers who are unable to support themselves financially because of their*

insufficient salaries go instead to public education. In addition, some schools are threatened with closure due to lack of staff and financial means to meet the living and working conditions of both learners and teachers.”

As to the broader economic environment in which schools operate, there is awareness of the challenges that students may face in the labor market. A sobering assessment is provided again by Father Hubert in Burkina Faso: *“having taken up the challenge of excellent results in school examinations, we must now take up the challenge of the employability of graduates...; we need to move towards more science, more technique and more professionalism in our educational offerings. Current students in the scientific series go so far as to pass the baccalaureate without experience of handling in a scientific laboratory...The same is true for the digital domain. They do not have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the computer tool; therefore, they have weaknesses in everything related to research or computer manipulation. We will have to find a way to improve science teaching and familiarize students more with computers. Finally, there is very little connection between real life and what is taught in class. Students find themselves poorly equipped to face the world of work.”*

Interesting initiatives are being piloted to respond to those challenges. Father Alexandre in Burkina Faso launched an entrepreneurship education project in his school with 25 students holding various positions to manage a business club center (B2C) serving the needs of students in the school. Examples include procuring sports uniforms with the name of students, the making of jewelry with the school's motto, a mini-market at the end-of-term party, the organization of a high school event. In addition, local entrepreneurs are invited to come to the school to share their experience. As noted by Father Alexandre, *“it is a modest initiative that aims to kindle the flame of creativity and entrepreneurship among young people... who later can start their own business. It is a nascent experience whose effects can only be appreciated in the long term. But for sure, this initiative has already sparked creativity in the student members of the workshop who have*

already made private enterprise as their professional choice in the future.”

Preparing youth for the labor market through vocational training while also instilling core values is also the focus of several projects run by La Salle brothers around the world. Brother Nestor Anaya Marin recounts several projects in his interview: *“In Ivory Coast I visited a shelter for street children and youth... [who] learn to read, write and count.. [while] becoming ‘masters’ in carpentry, blacksmithing, or electronics. The most important thing is that they are instilled with order, respect and organization, among other qualities, recovering their dignity and discovering opportunities for growth and development...In Kenya, I visited three educational centers where formal (academic) education goes hand in hand with agricultural education. Therefore, the educational centers are schools, farms and cultivation plots; all in one campus. Naturally, the students are those responsible for taking care of the animals and the production of the fruits.”*

Brother Nestor also shared experiences at universities that encourage service to others while also helping students practice their newly acquired skills: *“In the Philippines, ... [students at] a La Salle University implemented a graphic design program for the deaf... [so] many teachers and young people... learned signed language... In Mexico I have seen universities that ask their students to develop social projects... Young engineers have built houses for people who have suffered floods, brigades of dentists who walk for many hours in the mountains to reach the simplest people and offer them their dental services for free. Whether in formal or informal education, and from basic to higher education, there is always room for creativity and to connect people based simply on what is purely human.”*

7- To safeguard our common home

The last commitment suggested by Pope Francis is *“to safeguard and cultivate our common home, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources and adopting a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment.”* The reference is of course the encyclical *Laudato Si’* which highlights that

the environmental crisis is also an inner crisis due to broken relationships with the environment, as well as with others and society. Suggestions for educators focus on raising awareness to the need to care for the common home and providing opportunities for students to act.

In the Republic of Congo, Raoul Sika helped launch the Green School project whose objective is to raise awareness and train students in environmental protection. The project has four aims: Help students adopt a responsible attitude towards the environment; Make students messengers of the ideals of environmental protection; Promote active participation by local communities in environmental protection and restoration activities; and Train a generation of global citizens. In addition, as Raoul explains, *“Catholic school actors would like that in the next 3-5 years, our schools become ‘little windows open on Eden’, by the planting of trees (fruit trees), living hedges, flowers, grass and the creation of vegetable gardens wherever possible... This project is innovative because it provides a small answer to the question that ...Pope Francis asks himself on a planetary scale in the encyclical Laudato Si’, namely: ‘What kind of world do we want -leave us to those who come after us, to the children who grow up?’”*

In Palestine, several schools founded environmental clubs. Also relevant are Model United Nations (UN) activities for youth ages 15-18. A few hundred students participate every year in a three-day congress where they function like the UN with a General Assembly, a Security Council, and various committees to discuss and adopt resolutions. As Father Jamal Khader remarks, *“the seriousness of the discussions and the questions dealt with make this congress an admirable event, especially since it is prepared and organized by the students themselves. These are the leaders of tomorrow who begin to exercise their leadership now!”*

In Senegal, a school farm is being planned in the diocese of Kaolack. It will welcome students from all schools, Catholic or not. As explained by Brother Charles Biagui, *“we also want to cultivate in them the joy of producing at the local level in the spirit of eating healthy by producing*

healthy foodstuffs. The breeding of hens, guinea fowl, goats and others will serve as a framework and educational and didactic support for teachers, children and young people. The sale of the products will be used for the maintenance of the premises and the payment of the employees... Awareness of respect for the environment and the promotion of healthy food must be widespread... Farm workers will be supported by teaching assistants from other schools as part of the reflection to improve theoretical and practical teaching methods on ecology.”

In Belgium, the federation of Catholic schools for the French-speaking part of the country created an interdisciplinary digital tool for an educational journey inspired by *Laudato Si’*. The tool aims to combine the values of the Gospel and skills related to the philosophy and citizenship curriculum. As noted by Myriam Gesché, *“this tool is freely available online. It allows interactions with Internet users through comments on the blog. It promotes sharing ideas and critical reflections. It can participate in development of a collective educational culture and give ideas to other teachers to carry out such tools on other themes.”*

Education for sustainability (EFS) has also been a priority for Catholic schools in Mauritius. The program started in 2011 in 18 Catholic secondary and some 12,000 students have been engaged to-date. As noted by Gilberte Chung Kim Chung, lessons have been learned from the experience: *“First, to reach the set objectives, school leadership must share the vision, drive the EFS program or at least delegate the right person for its coordination... Second, teachers must play a key role... Students will follow when they are well guided. Third, ecology is not about one-off activities ... but the interrelatedness between the environment, society and economy, as well as values and beliefs, and our way of living... Fourth, education for sustainability must be mainstreamed at the individual school curriculum level across disciplines... Finally, we have yet to strategize on the best way forward, but there is hope as we continue to search for the best way to educate for sustainability... on the journey of transformative learning.”*

Conclusion

The objective of this article was to share a few insights from interviews conducted under the GCE project about efforts already made today in the seven areas for which Pope Francis called for renewed commitments as part of the Global Compact on Education. About 130 interviews have been conducted to date under the GCE project since it was launched at the end of November 2020. While the interviews discuss a wide range of topics related to Catholic education and integral human development, the commitments called for by Pope Francis emerge strongly from the stories that interviewees share. This is not surprising, and it is encouraging. Apart from educators in Catholic schools and universities, most educators in other types of schools also share those commitments and do their best to educate children and youth towards fraternal humanism and sustainability. Hopefully, some of the stories shared in this article and the interviews they are collected from will serve as a source of inspiration for your own work.

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PART II

Seven Interviews Illustrating the Commitments of the Global Compact on Education

In calling for a Global Compact for Education, Pope Francis suggested seven commitments for all those working in education: (1) to make human persons the center; (2) to listen to the voices of children and young people; (3) to advance the women; (4) to empower the family; (5) to welcome; (6) to find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics; and (7) to safeguard our common home. To share examples of what educators are already doing to help implement the vision of Pope Francis, the second part of this report consists of seven interviews illustrating how educators are putting these commitments into practice. The focus of these seven interviews broadly matches the commitments suggested by Pope Francis.

List of interviews:

1. Sor María Antonieta García Carrizales, Presidenta del Consejo de la CIEC, Péru
2. Sr. Antoinette Nneka Opara, Society of the Holy Child Jesus, Kenya
3. Sœur Mickerlyne Cadet, École Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice, Haïti
4. Cathy Low, Volunteer of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, Switzerland
5. Father René Micallef SJ, Associate Lecturer at the Gregorian University, Italy
6. Idesbald Nicaise, Professor of Economics at KU Leuven, Belgium
7. Myriam Gesché, Déléguée épiscopale pour l'enseignement, Belgique

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