



HOLY SEE

Statement by Monsignor Anthony R. Frontiero
Official of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
At the 2008 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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During Working Session 8:
Education and Awareness Raising in the Promotion of Human Rights

Mr. Moderator,

The demands of the common good are dependent on the social conditions of each historical period and are closely connected to respect for the integral promotion of the person and his or her fundamental rights. These demands concern above all the commitment to peace, the organization of the State's powers, a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment, and the provision of essential services to all, some of which are at the same time human rights, such as food, housing, work, education and access to culture, transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression, and the protection of religious freedom.¹ Overcoming cultural, juridical and social obstacles to the promotion of human rights calls for work in the area of information and education.² As John Henry Newman observed, "training of the intellect, which is best for the individual himself, best enables him to discharge his duties to society."³

In this regard, the Holy See would like to recall that, in the work of education and awareness, the family forms persons in the fullness of their dignity according to all their dimensions, including the social dimension. The family, in fact, constitutes a community of love and solidarity which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society. By exercising its mission to educate, the family contributes to the common good and constitutes the first school of social virtue, which all societies need. In the family, persons are helped to grow in freedom and responsibility, indispensable prerequisites for any function in society. With education, certain fundamental values are communicated and assimilated. That is why the family has a completely original and irreplaceable role in raising children. Parents have the duty and right to impart a religious education and moral formation to their children, a right the State cannot annul but which it must respect and promote. This is a primary right that the family may not neglect or delegate, yet must at the same time exercise with responsibility in close and vigilant cooperation

¹ Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 166.

² Cf. *ibid.*, n. 191.

³ As quoted by Barbara W. Shank, *The Call to Justice: Social Work in Catholic Higher Education*, 2007, p 11.

with civil and ecclesial agencies, since both are necessary for an integral education directed toward the formation of people educated in dialogue, encounter, sociality, legality, solidarity and peace, through the cultivation of the fundamental virtues of justice and charity.⁴

The Holy See is pleased to recall, as well, that through its vast network of schools, universities and institutions throughout the world, the Catholic Church endeavors to foster and support such cooperation in the education and formation of people of all ages, assisting them in developing an awareness of their personal values and to clarify conflicting values and ethical dilemmas. Catholic institutions of education and formation strive to provide opportunities to disadvantaged populations, and emphasize the importance of establishing services needed to meet basic human needs, which support the development of human capacities and enhance the social functioning of individuals and families. Catholic education seeks to cultivate an environment that exemplifies the Church's call to understand and support family and to participate in and contribute to the broader society.

Christian Scripture and the shared teaching of various Christian traditions make clear that God desires people to participate in social groups and to participate as contributing members of their immediate and extended community. As such, Catholic social teaching asserts that human beings are not only sacred, but are also social in nature. Human dignity, rights, and responsibilities are recognized in relation to family and others in the community. This teaching emphasizes the important role of the family in shaping values, in addressing questions of social justice, and in encouraging everyone to contribute to society at large.⁵ Catholic social teaching, which is increasingly and effectively being integrated in to academic curricula as well as pastoral practice, endeavors to assist in the formation of a developed sense of values, ethics, and a moral conscience for social justice. It embraces a rich heritage that places people at the center of social concerns, recognizes the dignity of the human person and the interdependence of humanity. It challenges the oppression of racism and bigotry, and works for social and economic justice, and it insists that all people of good will defend human rights, participate in society at all levels, and take action to serve the poor and vulnerable.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Delegation of the Holy See expresses its gratitude to the ODIHR for its commitment to education and awareness raising in the promotion of human rights. At the same time, the Holy See wishes to enjoin the ODIHR to remain focused on its particular areas of competence, and to take into account the recommendations of participating States, thereby ensuring greater effectiveness in realizing the goals that are clearly outlined in the agreed OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

⁴ Cf., *Compendium*., nos. 238-242.

⁵ Cf. Shank, p. 8.