



JECSE – Pastoral Webinar

**“He sent them two by two ... Accompaniment;
walking with our colleagues from and into the heart of our Ignatian tradition”**

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The Ignatian Educator by Fr Carlos Carneiro, sj – Portugal

1. Educating in a pluralist and secular context

Sometimes we idealise or dramatise the contexts in which we live – and which the school is an integral part - that we live out the mission of educating without passion, without charm, without direction; above all, without the certainty of faith in Jesus, as an indispensable ally in the Ignatian way of educating. Rather than being believing pedagogues, we allow ourselves become statisticians or sociologists of reality as if we did not have a "treasure" to share.

Nothing and nobody can hide or replace the person of Jesus in the Ignatian way of educating. There are no Ignatian schools without the experience of faith being at its centre. It is not possible to build a "living tradition" without the challenges of the Gospel and the desire for transcendence that exists in the new generations. Globalisation, new information technologies, scientific credibility, the power of affections and of a culture of leisure and mobility, remarried families, the ecological care of our common home, the rush to 'live' everything, etc. are for us a stimulus and not an obstacle to educate and to believe.

Educating is an act of faith. Every educator is a believer. He knows and believes in the possibilities of his pupils. He cannot educate without believing in those he want to educate. Jesus was a believer in this way of educating, of relating, of broadening horizons. He dared to propose and dared to expect an answer. It is only possible to educate in a relationship of trust. Nobody educates "imaginary" beings but rather real people, who will never be satisfied with the acquisition of "dehumanised" scientific or cultural knowledge. The pedagogical project we are proposing will never be a mechanical or ideological approach; rather we put the student at the centre and refuse to withdraw from the "battlefield".

We need strategic plans, pedagogical principles and educational models. We need scientific rigour and clarity about the ends to be achieved. But nothing can replace or elude the heart of Ignatian pedagogy: a relationship of trust, the possibility of personalised accompaniment, the credibility and coherence of life which arouse the desire to know the reasons which guide the faith and freedom of every educator.



Before accompanying each student on his or her "pilgrimage" (between Jerusalem and Emmaus and vice versa), each teacher cannot avoid the possibility of making an inner journey that brings him or her closer to Christ and the Church. Perhaps it is not obligatory to be a believer, but it is, at the very least, contradictory that an agnostic teacher would not open himself to the possibility of God; of a belief in a being that justifies the desire to educate in order to transform the world, in the manner of Jesus.

2. To know the details of the journey.

It is not enough to adhere to the project, to know the aims, to define the "profile" of the student to be educated. An educator does not always know what to do and how to do it. Often he starts the journey already tired, repeating formulas, not expecting more than the minimum from himself or his pupils. Too many educators are tired, "survivors", disillusioned, without a natural vocation for teaching.

The Society of Jesus believes in its collaborators and does not want to leave anyone to make their journey alone, just as Jesus did not leave his disciples alone on the way back to Emmaus, "disillusioned" or frustrated by choices that came to nothing. The disciples knew well the way back to Emmaus, just as educators so often know what needs to be done. What the disciples did not know was that they were blinded by the sadness and disappointment that robbed them of hope and gratitude. It is not enough to "accomplish", it is not enough to reach the goal, to have travelled all the way without allowing oneself to be transformed. We are what we let others do to us.

Every pilgrimage, just like every class, runs the risk of being only the offer of an expected curriculum and never a promise for the future. The pilgrim, student or teacher, may not fully know the way, may not master all the details, the map of the dangers and of the resting places; he or she may stray, make mistakes, may walk alone or accompanied, in a hurry or slowly, emptying or being filled with what happens to him or her. But what he or she cannot do is to erase from the memory the reason for the pilgrimage, the reasons why learning is a human investment that makes sense.

At every stage we go through, as in every class, there is a summons, a source which attracts and which may coincide with the proposal of the Gospel - the freedom of each one of us. The Gospel is not inhuman, disembodied, an abstraction. It is not a demand that is greater than the possibilities of life itself or beyond the reach of each person. It is not a path of successive obstacles that only a few can overcome. In reality, pilgrimage has a paradoxical dimension: the pilgrim leaves the place where he is from, his own home, to go to "another place", to find himself again at his roots.

3. Restlessness and Peace.

The pilgrim experiences an enormous interior restlessness as he gets closer to the goal. He knows that the pilgrimage begins when the desired goal is reached and the eyes of understanding are opened. We desire to stay with those who widen our horizons, and do not measure people by efficiency or success but rather prepare for us the bread (Jesus) and the fish (Community) that we need to live.



The end of the journey can have devastating effects on the pilgrim's initial certainties. The way becomes a call for a de-structuring of the usual securities and routines. The pilgrim has learnt to read the way, to enjoy doing it with others; not to arrive alone as he was when he started out, since at each encounter heaven has unleashed a real mobilisation against the indifference that freezes our hearts and challenges the myopia of the gaze.

An Ignatian educator is like a poor pilgrim; he needs constant humility to "say goodbye" to his certainties and allow himself to be, renewed, welcoming and adopting as "children" those that God has given him as pupils. An Ignatian educator is not a tourist guide or an adventurous wanderer who goes off on his own. He does not walk or teach at random, he knows what he wants, what he seeks, where he is going. He knows what he has, what he can do, what he needs. He knows how to ask, how to fall, how to start again, how to wait. The criteria of its success are more than the good results of its students. His urgency is not to generate "influential" people but "transforming" people who live out the Easter process in their daily lives. This is the miracle of the journey, the miracle of education.

Just as a pilgrim is not evaluated by the blisters, the pains, the kilometres travelled, so no educator is evaluated by the results in competition. The Ignatian Educator teaches to think, to discern, to forgive, to care, to integrate, to win and to lose, to serve. No failure brings him down, no success eludes him, no embrace is enough. So many educators set out on the way but so few allow *themselves* to be set out on the way; so many fulfil the promise but so few find themselves promised to joy.

For those who believe, a school will always be much more than a safe haven or a port of embarkation. It is the place of the improbable, the unexpected, the totally free. It is the house where one receives and adopts a message of eternal life, where one searches within oneself, finds one's interior map, made of consolations and desolations, looks for the signs that make one's interior world coincide with the cartography of the real events of history where one sees that God never disappears.