Pope: Educate to promote dignity, justice, and trust in a war-torn world

The Apostolic Letter “Drawing New Maps of Hope”, released on 28 October, marks the sixtieth anniversary of the conciliar declaration “Gravissimum Educationis”. In it, Pope Leo XIV reaffirms and expands that document’s vision, applying it to the challenges of the present time.

Reflecting on the millions of children who still lack access to basic education, and on the educational crises caused by war, migration, inequality, and poverty, the Pope asks how Christian education can respond today. In his Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope*, signed on 27 October 2025 and released to mark the 60th anniversary of the Concliar declaration ***Gravissimum Educationis***, he notes that the insights of *Gravissimum Educationis* remain relevant in today’s fragmented and digitalised environment, continuing to inspire educational communities to build bridges and to offer civic and professional formation with creativity. This direction, first traced by the Second Vatican Council, has generated a rich array of works and charisms that remain a spiritual and pedagogical treasure for the Church.

Educational charisms as living responses

The Letter emphasises that educational charisms are not fixed formulas but living responses to the needs of each age. Recalling the teaching of Saint Augustine on the true educator as one who awakens the desire for truth and freedom, the Pope surveys the tradition that spans from monastic communities to the mendicant orders and to the *Ratio Studiorum*, where scholastic thought met Ignatian spirituality.

He recalls the contributions of educators such as Saint Joseph Calasanz, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Saint Marcellin Champagnat, and Saint John Bosco, each of whom advanced distinctive educational methods serving the poor and marginalised. He also highlights the pioneering witness of women religious and laywomen—including Vicenta María López y Vicuña, Frances Cabrini, Josephine Bakhita, Maria Montessori, Katharine Drexel, and Elizabeth Ann Seton—who

expanded access to education for girls, migrants, and the disadvantaged.

Education as a shared mission

Pope Leo XIV underlines that education is always a collective effort in which teachers, students, families, administrators, pastors, and civil society all participate. He recalls the thought of Saint John Henry Newman—now named co-patron of the educational world alongside Saint Thomas Aquinas—as a model of intellectual rigour united with deep humanity.

The Pope encourages renewal in educational environments through empathy and openness, insisting that education must form the whole person, integrating knowledge with the heart and the capacity for discernment. Catholic schools and universities are to be places where inquiry is guided and supported, not suppressed. Teaching, he adds, is to be understood as a vocation of service that offers time, trust, competence, and compassion, joining justice with mercy.

The human person at the centre

The Letter reaffirms Paul VI's warning against reducing education to functional training or economic productivity. Education, Pope Leo XIV writes, must serve human dignity and the common good. A person cannot be confined to a set of measurable skills or to a predictable digital profile, but must be recognised as a unique individual with a face, a story, and a calling.

Without indulging nostalgia, the Pope situates his reflection firmly in the present. Using the image of fixed stars to describe the principles guiding education, he stresses that truth is discovered in communion, that freedom implies responsibility, and that authority must be exercised as service.

He calls Catholic education to rebuild trust in a world marked by fear and division, cultivating a sense of shared belonging that fosters fraternity among peoples and nations.

The interweaving of faith, culture, and life

Recalling his years of service in the diocese of Chiclayo in Peru, Pope Leo XIV reflects on education as a gradual journey of growth, built through dedication and perseverance. He presents Catholic schools as communities where faith, culture, and life are harmoniously united.

Technical updates alone, he writes, are not sufficient to meet contemporary

challenges; what is needed is discernment and coherence of vision. The educator's witness, both intellectual and spiritual, is as important as classroom instruction. For this reason, the formation of teachers—academic, pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual—is described as essential to the mission of Catholic education.

The family as the primary educator

The Pope reaffirms that the family remains the first and fundamental place of education. Other institutions can assist but never replace it. Collaboration among families, schools, and the wider community is essential, based on listening, shared responsibility, and mutual trust.

In an interconnected world, formation too must be interconnected. The Pope encourages greater cooperation between parish and diocesan schools, universities, professional institutes, movements, and digital and pastoral initiatives. Differences in methods or structures, he notes, should be viewed as resources rather than obstacles, contributing to a coherent and fruitful whole. The future, he says, demands growth in collaboration and unity of purpose.

Linking social and environmental justice

Integral education, the Letter insists, unites every dimension of the person and treats faith not as an additional subject but as the breath that gives life to all learning. In this way, Catholic education becomes a seedbed for an integral humanism that can respond to the urgent questions of our age.

The Pope situates this within a world wounded by conflict and violence. Education for peace, he explains, is not passive but active: it rejects aggression, teaches reconciliation, and cultivates a language of mercy and justice. He connects this mission with the need to link social and environmental justice, reminding readers that when the earth suffers, the poor suffer most. Education, therefore, must form consciences capable of choosing what is right, not merely what is advantageous, and of promoting sustainable and simple lifestyles.

Technology at the service of humanity

Drawing again on the teaching of Vatican II, Pope Leo XIV cautions against subjugating education to market logic or financial interests. He calls for the responsible use of technology, which should enrich learning rather than weaken relationships or community life.

He warns against purely technical efficiency that lacks soul, and against standardised knowledge that impoverishes the human spirit. No digital system, he observes, can replace the human capacities that make education fully alive—imagination, art, creativity, empathy, and even the willingness to learn through error. Artificial intelligence and digital environments, he adds, must be guided by ethical reflection and a concern for human dignity, justice, and the value of work.

Toward a culture of encounter

Building on the legacy of Pope Francis and the *Global Compact on Education*, Pope Leo XIV identifies three current priorities: the cultivation of interior life, which responds to young people's search for depth; the formation of a humane digital culture that places the person before the algorithm; and the education of new generations in the ways of peace, dialogue, and reconciliation.

He calls for a new educational culture marked by cooperation rather than rivalry, and by shared discernment rather than rigid hierarchy.

A symphony of the Spirit

In conclusion, the Letter invites educators to use language that heals, to keep an open and discerning heart, and to face today's challenges with courage and generosity. The Pope acknowledges the real difficulties of the present: fragmented attention caused by hyper-digitalisation, fragile relationships, social insecurity, and inequality.

Against these threats, he calls for a spirit of inclusivity and evangelical gratuity that expresses itself in concrete acts of justice and solidarity. When education loses sight of the poor, he warns, it loses its very soul.

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