

IV. Magisterial Teachings

The full text of the Second Vatican Council documents, *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Gravissimum Educationis* are available in Appendix A.

A. Documents of Vatican II

1. *Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) Paul VI, 1965*

Lumen Gentium, 31-33; 36

Lumen Gentium, 33: “All the laity...have the exalted duty of working for the ever greater spread of the divine plan of salvation to all men... Therefore *may the way be clear for them* (Emphasis added) to share diligently in the salvific work of the Church...”

Lumen Gentium, 37: The laity have the right and responsibility to participate in the Church’s work of salvation and that Bishops and pastors must be a source of encouragement for the laity “to undertake works *on their own initiative...*” (Emphasis added.)

2. *Apostolicam Actuositatem (On the Apostolate of the Laity) Paul VI, 1965*

Apostolicam Actuositatem, 3: Identifies the Lord Himself as the one who assigns the laity the right and responsibility to participate in the work of the Church, “The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.”

Apostolicam Actuositatem, 24: The Council restates that “...the laity may not be deprived of the possibility of *acting on their own accord.*” (Emphasis added.)

Apostolicam Actuositatem 24: Recognizes that “...in the Church there are many apostolic undertakings which are established by the free choice of the laity and regulated by their prudent judgment. The mission of the Church can be better accomplished in certain circumstances by undertakings of this kind...”

3. *Gravissimum Educationis (Declaration on Christian Education) Paul VI, 1965*

Gravissimum Educationis, 1 “...For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share...Children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience...Consequently it earnestly entreats all those who hold a position of public authority or who are in charge of education to see to it that youth is never deprived of this sacred right.”

Gravissimum Educationis 3: *The Authors of Education*

“*Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking.* (Emphasis added.) Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched

by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church. Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually led to a companionship with their fellowmen and with the people of God. Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.

The family which has the primary duty of imparting education needs help of the whole community. In addition, therefore, *to the rights of parents and others to whom the parents entrust a share in the work of education*, (Emphasis added.) certain rights and duties belong indeed to civil society, whose role is to direct what is required for the common temporal good. Its function is to promote the education of youth in many ways, namely: to protect the duties and rights of parents and others who share in education and to give them aid; according to the *principle of subsidiarity*, (Emphasis added.) when the endeavors of parents and other societies are lacking, to carry out the work of education in accordance with the wishes of the parents; and, moreover, as the common good demands, to build schools and institutions.

Finally, in a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognized as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all men, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe, and, in her unfailing solicitude, of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life. *The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote for all peoples the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human.* (Emphasis added.)

Gravissimum Educationes, 4-8

B. *Sapientiae Christianae* (On Christians as Citizens) Leo XIII, 1890

The full text of *Sapientiae Christianae* is available online at www.napcis.org: Resources.

Sapientiae Christianae 42. “This is a suitable moment for us to exhort especially heads of families to govern their households according to these precepts, and to *be solicitous without failing for the right training of their children*. (Emphasis added.) The family may be regarded as the cradle of civil society, and it is in great measure within the circle of family life that the destiny of the States is fostered. Whence it is that they who would break away from Christian discipline are working to corrupt family life, and to destroy it utterly, root and branch. From such an unholy purpose they allow not themselves to be turned aside by the reflection that it cannot, even in any degree, be carried out without inflicting cruel outrage on the parents. *These hold from nature their right of training the children to whom they have given birth, with the obligation super-added of shaping and directing the education of their little ones to the end for which God vouch-safed the privilege of transmitting the gift of life. It is, then, incumbent on parents to strain every nerve to ward off such an outrage, and to strive manfully to have and to hold exclusive authority to direct the education of their offspring, as is fitting, in a Christian manner, and first and foremost to keep them away from schools where there is risk of their drinking in the poison of impiety.* (Emphasis added.) Where the right education of youth is concerned, no amount of trouble or labor can be undertaken, how great soever, but that even greater still may not be called for. In this regard, indeed, *there are to be found in many countries Catholics worthy of general admiration, who incur considerable outlay and bestow much zeal in founding schools for the education of youth.* (Emphasis added.) It is highly desirable that such noble example may be generously followed, where time and circumstances demand, yet all should be intimately persuaded that the minds of children are most influenced by the training they receive at home. If in their early years they find within the walls of their homes the rule of an

upright life and the discipline of Christian virtues, the future welfare of society will in great measure be guaranteed.”

C. *Divini Illius Magistri* (On Christian Education of Youth) Pius XI, 1929

The full text of *Divini Illius Magistri* is available in Appendix B.

Divini Illius Magistri, 7. “It is therefore as important to make no mistake in education, as it is to make no mistake in the pursuit of the last end, with which the whole work of education is intimately and necessarily connected. In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end, and that in the present order of Providence, since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, who alone is ‘the way, the truth and the life,’ there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education.”

Divini Illius Magistri, 35 Reinforces the grave obligation of parents as the primary educators of their children to refuse schools that threaten salvation of souls. “...as Leo XIII declares in another memorable encyclical, where He thus sums up the rights and duties of parents: ‘By nature parents have a right to the training of their children, but with this added duty that the education and instruction of the child be in accord with the end for which by God's blessing it was begotten. Therefore it is the duty of parents to make every effort to prevent any invasion of their rights in this matter, and to *make absolutely sure that the education of their children remain under their own control in keeping with their Christian duty*, and above all to *refuse to send them to those schools in which there is danger of imbibing the deadly poison of impiety.*’” (Emphasis added.)

Divini Illius Magistri, 80. “For the mere fact that a school gives some religious instruction (often extremely stunted), does not bring it into accord with the rights of the Church and of the Christian family, or make it a fit place for Catholic students. To be this, it is necessary that all the teaching and the whole organization of the school, and its teachers, syllabus and text-books in every branch, be regulated by the Christian spirit, under the direction and maternal supervision of the Church; so that Religion may be in very truth the foundation and crown of the youth's entire training; and this in every grade of school, not only the elementary, but the intermediate and the higher institutions of learning as well. To use the words of Leo XIII: (*Militantis Ecclesiae*, 1897) ‘It is necessary not only that religious instruction be given to the young at certain fixed times, but also that every other subject taught, be permeated with Christian piety. *If this is wanting, if this sacred atmosphere does not pervade and warm the hearts of masters and scholars alike, little good can be expected from any kind of learning, and considerable harm will often be the consequence.*’” (Emphasis added.)

Divini Illius Magistri, 88. “Perfect schools are the result not so much of good methods as of good teachers, teachers who are thoroughly prepared and well-grounded in the matter they have to teach; who possess the intellectual and moral qualifications required by their important office; who cherish a pure and holy love for the youths confided to them, because they love Jesus Christ and His Church, of which these are the children of predilection; and who have therefore sincerely at heart the true good of family and country. Indeed it fills Our soul with consolation and gratitude towards the divine Goodness to see, side by side with religious men and women engaged in teaching, such a large number of excellent lay teachers...”

Divini Illius Magistri, 94 “The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by Baptism...”

Divini Illius Magistri, 95. “For precisely this reason, Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ.”

Divini Illius Magistri, 96. Hence the true Christian, product of Christian education, is the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly and consistently in accordance with right reason illumined by the supernatural light of the example and teaching of Christ...”

D. *Familiaris Consortio* (Christian Family in the Modern World) John Paul II, 1981

The full text of *Familiaris Consortio* is available online at www.napcis.org: Resources.

Familiaris Consortio, 36 “As the Second Vatican Council recalled, ‘since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it.’”

“...The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.”

Familiaris Consortio, 40 “The right of parents to choose an education in conformity with their religious faith must be absolutely guaranteed.

The State and the Church have the obligation to give families all possible aid to enable them to perform their educational role properly. Therefore both the Church and the State must create and foster the institutions and activities that families justly demand, and the aid must be in proportion to the families' needs. However, those in society who are in charge of schools must never forget that the parents have been appointed by God Himself as the first and principal educators of their children and that their right is completely inalienable.

But corresponding to their right, parents have a serious duty to commit themselves totally to a cordial and active relationship with the teachers and the school authorities.

If ideologies opposed to the Christian faith are taught in the schools, the family must join with other families, if possible through family associations, and with all its strength and with wisdom help the young depart from the faith. (Emphasis added.) In this case the family needs special assistance from pastors of souls, who must never forget that parents have the inviolable right to entrust their children to the ecclesial community.”

E. Charter of the Rights of the Family Pontifical Council for the Family, 1983

The full text of *Charter of the Rights of the Family* is available online at www.napcis.org: Resources.

The *Charter of the Rights of the Family* appeared two years after *Familiaris Consortio*, which contained a reference to the Charter. It is intended for all families, whether or not they are Christian.

Presented by the Holy See to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today's world October 22, 1983.

ARTICLE 5 -- Since they have conferred life on their children, parents have the original, primary, and inalienable right to educate them; hence they must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.

- a) Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, taking into account the cultural traditions of the family which favor the good and the dignity of the child; they should also receive from society the necessary aid and assistance to perform their educational role properly.
- b) Parents have the right to choose freely schools or other means necessary to educate their children in keeping with their convictions. Public authorities must ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom.
- c) Parents have the right to ensure that their children are not compelled to attend classes which are not in agreement with their own moral and religious convictions. In particular, sex education is a basic right of the parents and must always be carried out under their close supervision, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them.
- d) The rights of the parents are violated when a compulsory system of education is imposed by the state from which all religious formation is excluded.
- e) The primary right of parents to educate their children must be upheld in all forms of collaboration between parents, teachers, and school authorities, and particularly in forms of participation designed to give citizens a voice in the functioning of schools and in the formulation and implementation of educational policies.
- f) The family has the right to expect that the means of social communication will be positive instruments for the building up of society, and will reinforce the fundamental values of the family.