

CULTURE AND RELIGION: TOGETHER FOR EDUCATION

Benedict XVI Speaks of Paul VI as Teacher

BRESCIA, Italy, NOV. 8, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- There should be complete harmony between the cultural and religious dimensions of education, so that young people are truly prepared to meet modernity, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope affirmed this connection when he inaugurated today the new premises of the Paul VI Institute. The Holy Father was visiting Brescia, the birthplace of Paul VI, for a one-day apostolic visit.

"We live in times in which a real 'educational crisis' is evident," he said, observing that "it is necessary to transmit to future generations something valid, solid rules for comportment, to indicate lofty objectives toward which one should decisively order one's life."

"The demand for an education capable of meeting the expectations of young people grows," the Pontiff observed, "an education that is first of all witness and, for the Christian educator, witness of faith."

Benedict XVI said his predecessor can give us guidance in the area of education. He particularly highlighted Paul VI's emphasis on an education that unites culture and faith.

In 1933, Father Montini -- the future Paul VI -- wrote: "[I]n secular circles, intellectuals even and perhaps especially in Italy think nothing of Christ. In contemporary culture he is largely unknown, forgotten, absent," Benedict XVI cited.

"Montini the educator, the student and priest, the bishop and Pope, always felt the necessity of a qualified Christian presence in the world of culture, art, society, a presence rooted in the truth of Christ, and, at the same time, attentive to man and his vital needs," he added. And citing Paul VI again: "... no separate compartments in the soul, culture on one side and faith on the other; school on one side, Church on the other. Doctrine, like life, is one."

"In other words," the German Pontiff explained, "for Montini what was essential was the complete harmony and integration between the cultural and religious dimension in formation, with a particular emphasis on knowledge of Christian doctrine and the practical implications for life."

Witnesses

The Bishop of Rome said his predecessor particularly understood the importance of equipping young people to face the modern world.

"Giovanni Battista Montini insisted on the formation of young people," he said, "to make them capable of entering into relation with modernity, a relationship that is difficult and often critical, but always constructive and dialogical. He pointed to some negative characteristics in modern culture, both in the area of knowledge and that of action, such as subjectivism, individualism and the unlimited affirmation of the subject. At the same time, however, he held the necessity of dialogue on the basis of a solid doctrinal formation, whose unifying principle was faith in Christ; a mature Christian 'consciousness,' therefore, capable of confrontation with everyone, without, however, ceding to the fashions of the time."

Finally, Benedict XVI noted how Paul VI understood the importance of witness in education. He cited another affirmation of his predecessor: "[C]ontemporary man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, or, if he listens to teachers, he does so because they are witnesses."