

Youth Education in Contest: A Study of The Encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929)

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Abstract

*This article aims to understand the enunciative flows and frictions of the Catholic Church on youth education. It uses the qualitative approach and its research materials are some bibliographic and documentary references, with special emphasis on the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri*, promulgated by Pius XI, on December 31, 1929. It uses the description and analysis of utterances as theoretical-methodological contributions. It considers that youth education has become the agenda of dispute between the Catholic Church, the family and civil society. According to Pius XI, there was a hierarchy between such institutions that could not be challenged. The father and mother, as Christian devotees, used to be considered the first educators and should be attentive to their functional roles at home. Without the execution of these prescriptions, youth education could be weakened or even succumbed in "modern times".*

Keywords: Youth, Catholic Church, Family, Civil Society

1. Introduction

Currently, the conception of "modern times" still has a positive meaning, being characterized with assumptions about development, progress and civility. In some cases, the conception of "ancient times" has a pejorative meaning, characterized by assumptions about late, archaic and unfeasible.

In the context of history, it is possible to investigate the relationship between these two times with another perspective, because: what is considered modern can bring along the resumption of what is considered old, even when it results in novelties. What is considered ancient does not refer exclusively to what is overcome, because it moves the very reinvention of the visible and invisible things of the world (LE GOFF, 2003).

In the first half of the 20th century, the understanding of the process of secularization of the world became an emblem of "modern times" and referred to an intense process by which sectors of society and culture were removed from the domination of religious institutions. It was manifested with the withdrawal of the Catholic Church from areas that had previously been under its control or influence, as

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well as "the separation of the Church and the State, expropriation of the Church lands, or emancipation of the ecclesiastical power education, for example" (BERGER, 2003, p.119).

However, even with the process of secularization, the Catholic Church remained active, acting to expand, or at least maintain, its influence on (de)limiting modes of existence. One action did not exclude the other. What was once considered modern-secular did not entirely exclude what was considered ancient-religious. The Catholic Church remained and exhibited a vitality that was deemed extinct. There was an intense shock between innovations and the apparatus of tradition, the longing for progress and the return of the sacred, the public and private sphere, the generational customs and the unevenness of their remaining in the present (MATA, 2010). Among its main concerns was youth education.

In the scientific sphere, it is possible to say that there is no veiled and homogeneous agreement on youth, because it has complexities and its own configuration of expression: it depends on how, when and who makes its meanings. Therefore, it is feasible to know the writings concerning it, in the present as well as in the past. In view of these initial considerations, this article aims to understand the enunciative flows and frictions of the Catholic Church on youth education in the first half of the 20th century.

2. Materials and Methods

Over the 20th century, as well as currently, official documents of the Catholic Church were already written based on quotations and/or commentaries of the Sacred Scripture, apostolic tradition and magisterium. The Sacred Scripture was seen as a source of "irrefutable truth", where the New and Old Testament complemented each other and related to demonstrate the legitimacy of the salvation promise, that is, an eternal, postmortem life. The Apostolic Tradition organized and maintained the transmission of the "revealed truth" among ones and others". It would sediment institutional hierarchies and promote polarities between those who were able to drive and those who should let themselves be driven. The Church Magisterium served to authentically interpret the Sacred Scripture and promote new writings. Since the previous century, not only the writings of the Doctors of the Church, but also the papal documents were considered a fundamental part of the Magisterium.

Knowing this, we have chosen to use, as the main source of research, the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri*, promulgated by Pius XI, on December 31, 1929. This internationally disseminated encyclical brings in itself flows and friction enunciatives on youth education.

It is possible to consider that the directive statements of the Catholic Church do not constitute an immutable unity, once they are in the transversality of phrases and propositions. The utterances do not get to an end in oral or written language. They are actions – of an individual/institution who speaks and/or writes – which brings within themselves things that are transmitted and preserved, which have a value, and of which they are appropriate, repeated, reproduced and transformed (FOUCAULT, 2012).

The utterances consolidate modes of existence. Therefore, it is feasible to take them by the surface contacts they keep with what surround them, in order to map the "regime of truth" that welcomes them and that, at the same time, support them, reinforce and justify their reiterations. The utterances overlap another/others or repel the divergent one/(s).

Instead of being a definitively spoken thing [...] the utterance, at the same time it arises in its materiality, it comes up with a status, enters networks, is placed in fields of use, offers the transfers and possible modifications while it integrates in operations and in strategies in which its identity remains or is erased. Thus, the utterance circulates, serves, dodges, allows or prevents a wish fulfilment, is docile or rebellious to interests, enters the order of disputes and struggles, becomes the subject of appropriation or rivalry (FOUCAULT, 2002, p. 121).

The analysis of a pontifical document should therefore, attempt to the flows and frictions of the very utterances. There is no intention of organizing the utterances into categories thought *a priori*. Neither to identify a supposed essence of them, but to find the "regimes of truth" by which they are triggered and deleted.

In this case, even silences are only silences, for which it is not important to seek fillers; they should be read by what they are and not as unspoken things that would hide a sense that did not come out of the speech. Methodologically, this is both easier and harder. Easier, because it does not involve a whole set of linguistic and analytical operations that other discourse analyses require. More difficult, because it is necessary to be attentive to what has been effectively said, only the inscription of what is said, without imagining what could be contained in the gaps and silences (VEIGA-NETO, 2007, p. 98).

With the qualitative approach, the cataloged information is thoroughly described and the analysis of the utterances tends to follow an inductive path (LÜDKE; ANDRÉ, 1986). With such approach, there is no intention of making judgments or allowing prejudices and beliefs to contaminate the results. Attention is given to the nuances attributed to youth education. Thus, before knowing the enunciative flows and frictions contained in that pontifical document referred to, it becomes valid to draw a brief profile of Pius XI, mentioning other documents written by him, as well as some information on the historical conjuncture in which he was inserted.

3. Results

At the beginning of the 20th century, the world was still subject to the capitalist supremacy of the nation states of Europe, such as England. However, a movement of supremacy to Germany and the United States, driven by its industries and armaments was perceived. Asia and Africa were disputed by the great imperialist powers that wanted to (re)colonize them. New nation states emerged and defended the premise of self-government, without external interference. The world seemed like an "immense powder keg" and for the pastors of the Catholic Church that was a consequence of the very actions of human beings that dismantled God's designs (KÜNG, 2002).

During the beginning of World War I (1914-1918), the dispute over consumer markets resulted in rivalries between imperialist states and the division into two antagonistic poles: the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria and Italy) and the Triple Entente (England, France and Russia). In addition to thousands of deaths, the War had as consequences new state divisions, Europe's economic decline, the rise of the

United States, the deployment of Socialism in Russia and the emergence of authoritarian regimes in Italy (Fascism) and Germany (Nazism) (HARARI, 2018).

In the midst of the global catastrophe, attempts at dialogue for peace by Benedict XV were disastrous. The Vatican did not participate in the final decisions for the suspension of the war. The Catholic Church was no longer seen as a power to directly interfere with state decisions, especially rich states and those ones in continuous socioeconomic development, from Europe and North America (FISCHER-WOLLPERT, 1999; KÜNG, 2002).

Seeking to legitimize the Catholic Church's performance in the post-war world, Benedict XV's successor, Pius XI refuted the idea that faith was a private issue, aiming to strengthen it, in the midst of an increasingly rational world. In his encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio*, promulgated on December 23, 1922, he stressed the importance of Christians building a society entirely based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, in which the "Good Shepherd" would act on all aspects of life, where the Catholic Church would remain active. From two other encyclicals, *Quas Primas* and *Miserentissimus Redemptor* proposed worship of Christ the King and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Concerning the Catholic Church, he promulgated the encyclical *Mortalium animos* on January 6, 1928, in which he reiterated her unity under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff.

During his pontificate in 1929, the Italian State regulated the territorial demarcations of a city where the "celebrated pastor" had absolute autonomy and political leadership: the Vatican state city. With his signature in the Treaty of Latrão, rather than a broad state, as the previous Pontiffs intended, then the Catholic Church was responsible for the administration of minimal territory, although it still had a relative impact on the decisions of other State-nations and legitimacy before them, especially in Latin America (KÜNG, 2002).

In honor of 40 years of Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on the condition of workers in "modern times", Pius XI promulgated the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* and the encyclical *Divinis Redemptoris*, through which he proposed the restoration and improvement of the social order under the Evangelical Law.

It was about the importance of rejecting the "internationalism" of money and economic nationalism, stressed in uncontrolled and unrestricted profit, but also the claims of atheist Communism. Among the reasons for his reaction were the loss of territories for the newly formed Italian state, the fear that nation states were an obstacle to the Church's action towards the faithful and the concern that "modern inventions" would deviate from the Salvation.

By promulgating the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* in 1929, Pius XI was immersed in this hectic juncture and intended to direct healthy words about the various problems of youth education. According to him, in different locations, nation states sought the democratization of teaching, emphasizing the implementation of the universal, free and mandatory public primary school, , in addition to investing – with divergences – in secondary education, contributing for secular teaching and learning in civil society. At the same time, the family was in process of reconfiguration and no longer paying attention to their educational function. In view of this, the Catholic Church saw herself in the mission of presenting opinions on youth education, outlining hierarchies and functions for everyone.

According to the Pontiff, education – in its broad sense – should be seen as a social and not individual project. Recognizing the insufficiency of earthly goods for individual and collective happiness, God's creatures sought material progress today and aimed to achieve higher perfection through education. However, instead of asking God for grace, they were concentrated and immobilized in themselves by being stuck to earthly as well as temporal things.

According to Pius XI, the Catholic Church, family and civil society (in the process of secularization) had strong participation in youth education, with diverse and corresponding proportions. According to him, the family was instituted by God for Christian education at home. The family had the priority of rights in civil society.

However, it did not have all the means for its own improvement. The civil society had the means for such improvement, that is, "the common temporal good", and the ability to contribute to the good of the family or its total damage. The Catholic Church, as a "society of supernatural and universal order", was a perfect society because it gathered in itself all means for its end", that is, the salvation of souls. That is why it was positioned above family and civil society.

The Catholic Church had two supernatural titles, conferred exclusively upon it and superior to others, that is, those only landly. The first of them was given by Jesus Christ, namely the "supreme mission of magisterium", where the Catholic Church was able to teach all peoples obedience to God's designs. Jesus Christ had conferred on this Magisterium the infallibility, along with the precept of teaching doctrine. The Catholic Church was the guide to truth, dedicating itself to preserving the divine, integra and inviolable faith, in the individual and collective actions of Christians.

The second title was "supernatural motherhood". Being the "Wife of Jesus Christ", the Catholic Church generated, nourished and educated the faithful in the divine life of grace. Acted, regardless of any governmental action, for its educational mission. He had the right to use the heritage produced in the old and new teaching knowledge, as well as the possibility of judging them favorable or contrary to education.

The Catholic Church had the full right to promote letters, arts and sciences, when necessary or useful to youth Christian education and the work of salvation. It could found and maintain suitable schools and institutions for the laity, help in the development of culture and different kinds of knowledge. Such actions did not prioritize divergent provisions to civil society or its annihilation. The Catholic Church was willing to help by agreeing on any disagreements, provided that her decisions were not destabilized. This relationship was not an "undue interference", but a "maternal measure" to protect the faithful against "the serious dangers of all doctrinal and moral venom", because:

[...] it is the Church's inalienable right, and at the same time its indispensable duty to monitor all the education of her children, the faithful, in any institution, both public or private, not only concerning what is being taught there, but in any other discipline or disposition, while related to religion and morality (Pius XI, 1929).

According to Pius XI, the Catholic Church realized the importance of not making mistakes in the conduct of future generations, nor in the direction towards its last end. The excellence of Christian education was in the possibility of ensuring "the Highest Good, God, to the souls of the students, and the maximum happiness possible in this world to human society". The vigilance of the Church did not fail to produce incitement to the order and well-being of the family and of all civil society, "by distancing away

from youth that moral poison that at this age, inexperienced and fickle, usually has easier acceptance and faster extension in practice."

Without the habit of respecting God, young women and young men were disorganized, disobedient and induced to disturb various places, such as home, the city and even all civil society. Based on millennial precepts, the youth Christian education would print the first, most powerful and lasting direction in life. Moreover, they were instigated not to move away from the path of salvation.

Pius XI pointed out that the Catholic Church knew how to respond to God's mission to educate human generations in Christian life. The Church acted in the world, creating and promoting, all over the centuries, several schools and educational institutions, in different branches of knowledge. Also made monasteries, convents, colleges, cathedral and non-cathedral officers, where faith was present enabling the spread of faith and citizenship. The Catholic Church also helped build universities in various parts of the world, always on initiative and under the custody of the Holy See. With the missionaries, the Catholic Church sought to educate "for Christian life and for civilization." She has radiated new possibilities of learning in the field of letters, philosophy, art and architecture. Many of these fields emerged driven by faith

For him, the rights of the family and civil society in youth education were not, in a certain way, in opposition to the "supereminence of the Church", but in a possible harmony.

[...] the supernatural order, to which the rights of the Church belong, not only destroys or diminishes the natural order, to which the other mentioned rights belong, but on the contrary, it increases and perfects it, and both orders provide mutual assistance and as a complement to proportional respectively to each one's nature and dignity. Precisely, because both proceed from God. And God cannot be contradicted (PiUS XI, 1929).

Created by God, the family had the educational mission in agreement with the Church: an inalienable right, for its obligation in the world was inseparably articulated; a right prior to any civil society; an inviolable right on the part of any and all earthly power. Care for the children should, therefore, be performed until they were willing to take care of themselves. The early separation between each other was harmful to the family order.

At home, the Christian education of youth was not limited to pass on beliefs through words, but also through everyday practice. As educators, the father and mother were responsible for avoiding their children's curiosity and inclination to the sins of the flesh, guiding them not to corrupt God's designs. Bearing witness of faith, they taught, with their own example, a very large family model, once the amount of children represented God's blessings to the couple. Despite the differences, the children should prioritize friendly bonds with each other, valuing the bonds of brotherhood just like Jesus Christ did with his apostles and faithful.

Father and mother had a duty to meet their children's basic needs (food, protection, etc.), but they should also monitor the risks arising from their rebellious acts. Being responsible in everyday life, father and mother could be attentive to daily correction. In certain cases, the correction could have more

incisive contours, as it aimed to prevent the accomplishment of moral deviations. However, it should be performed with caution, since exasperation could spring in the children.

According to Pius XI, in their youth, the children were weakened by their affective and sexual changes, so the correction did not intend to exterminate the deepest desires, but to delay their realization. The correction aimed to maintain chastity before marriage took effect. With the inculcation of decency, father and mother taught not to show more than was allowed, refuted the gestures that aroused undecorous desires, in addition to the ways of dressing, looking at themselves and others.

At home, the children of a couple, from an early age, should learn the creed, the importance of the sacraments and one of the most reliable commandments of the Law of God, that is, to honor the father and mother, thanking the bond that united them. The children were responsible for materially helping the father and mother, in cases of illness, old age or even loneliness. They were forbidden to abandon them in the last years of their lives, giving them what they had received. They should keep the honor to their father and mother, gladly accepting the admonitions, whether emancipated or outside the house of their parents. Willingly accepting the admonitions, even when emancipated or outside the home of their parents.

According to the Pontiff, some rulers argued that the human being was born a citizen and therefore belonged primarily to the state. However, they did not realize that before someone became a citizen, he was already a son. Therefore, the decision on the education of children initially belonged to the father and, in addition, the mother. The right of the father and mother to educate was not absolute or despotic, for it was "inseparably subordinate to the last end and natural and divine law", besides being directly subordinated and linked to the decisions of the Catholic Church.

Whereupon, the mission of educating belonged "first and foremost, first of all to the Church and the family", belonging to them by "natural and divine right, and therefore in an irrevocable, unassailable and irreplaceable way". However, civil society also had duties in the face of youth education, besides promoting peace and security for citizens, material well-being and free access to faith.

Directly impacting the demands of civil society, nation states did not replace the family's functions, but could supply her shortcomings and provide appropriate means for a straight education of their developing citizens, staying in harmony with the natural rights of younger generations and supernatural rights of the church,

They had a duty to protect the previous right of the father and mother in the education of their children and respect the supernatural right of the Church before this type of education. It was up to the nation states to protect the right of new generations, in cases of physical or moral faults, from the action of the parents, by default, disability or indignities of those.

In addition to helping the Church and the family in education, nation states were able to create their own public and/or private schools and institutions, contributing to citizens having the necessary knowledge of their civic and national duties, a certain degree of intellectual, moral and physical culture, provided that they were focused on the common good. However, it was unfair and unlawful to try to monopolize youth education or force citizens to attend, exclusively their training centers, which was not in accordance with religious precepts.

According to the Roman Pontiff, schools managed by different nation states needed to harmonize with the family and the Catholic Church, aiming at a moral unity between them, to the point of constituting – together with them – a consolidated reference of education, " under penalty of failing in its scope, and otherwise becoming a work of destruction." Parents were responsible for choosing the schools their children would attend. Teachers were forbidden to disturb the youth's faith, promoting interest for absolute, illusory and false freedom. Neither teachers, nor parents, had the right to blemish the prescriptions raised, or manage them according to their unique intentions, because the education of this exquisite audience had to "correct disorderly inclinations, excite and order the good ones".

The Catholic Church challenged the "modern systems of various names", which called for a desired autonomy and unlimited freedom of young people, and which diminished or even suppressed the action of the educator. Such "modern systems", self-styled with seculars, excluded or despised religious precepts and attributed young women and young men "an exclusive primacy of initiative and an independent activity of all natural and divine higher law, in the work of their education" .

In favor of freedom in schools, these "modern systems" made young women and young men "slaves to their blind pride and disorderly passions." They sought to submit to questions "the supernatural facts concerning education", such as the priestly or religious vocation".

[...] Nowadays, it is indeed, quite strange, the case of educators and philosophers who are fatigued in search of a moral and universal code of education, as if there were neither the Decalogue, nor the evangelical law, nor the natural law, carved by God in the heart of man, promulgated by the straight reason, coded with positive revelation by the same God in the Decalogue. And, likewise, such innovators, as contempt, call Christian education 'heteronoma', 'passive', 'late', , because it is founded on divine authority and its holy law (Pius XI, 1929).

In the first half of the 20th century, while some Catholic schools directed their pedagogical practices to a specific sex, being known as educational spaces appropriate for the integral formation of childhood and, male or female youth, the number of lay schools, which valued co-education, that is, the combination of the sexes in the same educational space, with similar subjects, increased.

The state-nations historically linked to Protestantism, like the United States, Sweden and Finland, pioneered the implementation of co-education. However, in the state-nations historically linked to Catholicism, such as Italy, Portugal and Spain, as well as those located in Latin America, co-education has aroused opposition until the last decades of the 20th century. For the high echelon of the Catholic Church, this approach could weaken the virility of young men and, considered fragile and delicate, to brutalize the young women, causing them to lose their docility. In addition, young women and boys would be subject to affective and sexual temptations caused by the coexistence of differences.

According to Pius XI, co-education aroused "a deplorable confusion of ideas that confused legitimate human coexistence with promiscuity and leveling equality." Between man and woman:

[...] there is no argument in nature itself, which makes them diverse in the body, inclinations and skills, no argument from which it is deduced that there may or should be promiscuity, let alone equality in the formation of the two sexes. These,

according to the Creator's admirable designs, are intended to complement each other in the family and society, precisely for their diversity, which, therefore, must be maintained and favoured in educational formation, with the necessary distinction and corresponding separation, proportionate to the various ages and circumstances.

These principles apply in timely time and place, according to the standards of Christian prudence, in all schools, particularly in the most delicate and decisive period of training, which is adolescence; and in the gymnastic and sporting exercises, with particular preference to Christian modesty in female youth, to which all exhibition and publicity (Pius XI, 1929) is very badly all about display and publicity (PIUS XI, 1929).

According to him, "the guilt against good customs was an effect, not so much of intellectual ignorance, as well as and especially of the weakness of will, exposed to occasions and not sustained by the means of Grace". It was urgent to monitor the complex teaching and learning process in schools, for the good of children and the whole family. Children and, especially young people, with Christian parents, were forbidden to attend secular schools, where rationality overlapped faith. The coexistence in these schools became viable only in certain temporal and territorial circumstances, since judged by a representative of the Church (PIUs XI, 1929).

Contrary to the idea of gender equality in secular schools, Pius XI stressed that, even with the frequency in such institutions, young women and young men lacked examples at home. From an early age, the boy should be led to identify with his father and girl with his mother. The socialization of the boy would highlight the future profession and authority he would later acquire. The socialization of the girl would emphasize the domestic chores and submission the daily wills of the father. Preparing her for continuous submission in the future family, with her husband.

Pius XI reiterated that religion was the true foundation of education given in Catholic schools, organized by religious orders and congregations, or even bishops. In them there was assiduous surveillance of teachers, programs, books, contents, etc. Even with the weather stemming from the high costs, it remained a viable option for the father and mother who had already begun the Christian education of their children.

[...] nowadays it is necessary to monitor all the more extensive and careful, the more have increased the occasions of moral and religious sinking for inexperienced youth, especially in the wicked and licentious books, many of which have increased devilishly scattered, at ridiculous and despicable price, in the shows of the cinematographer, and now also in the radio auditions, which multiply and facilitate all sorts of readings, such as the cinematographer all sorts of shows (PIO XI, 1929).

According to the Pontiff, anchored in solid religious precepts, Catholic schools contributed to the extent of human, individual and social, spiritual and intellectual, sensitive and moral life, not to diminish it, but to perfect it according to the examples and Christian doctrine. For its implementation, the Catholic Church

lacked the support of civil society, through actions of partnership with the nation states, and the active participation of the father and mother.

4. Final considerations

Pius XI's directive statements, contained in the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri*, point out how youth education became the target of recommendations in the mid-20th century. In such statements, youth is presented as a phase of doubts and uncertainties. Besides being a phase of constant rebellion, where it was possible to destabilize ancient modes of existence.

According to Pius XI, for the success of youth education, hierarchies between the Catholic Church, family and civil society were viable. The first had authority over the others. The second one should be protected by the third, but should accept the opinions of the first. The third could help the second, as long as it did not refute the premises of the first. Despite the disputes, the partnerships between them were seen as advisable for the good of youth.

Also, according to the Roman Pontiff, in means of divergences of interests between the Catholic Church, the family and civil society, the father and mother – considered the first educators – were responsible for choosing the schools that their children would attend, watching them closely so that they would not insert content that could cause affective and sexual deviations.

Catholic schools were preferred in relation to secular schools, because in them Christian teachings were protagonists in teaching and learning. The father and mother, as good devotees of the Church, should be paid attention to the dangerous coexistences between young women and boys in the same school, because co-education could trigger sleeping desires or anticipate them. Living with differences was not advisable. Without the execution of these prescriptions, youth education could be weakened or even succumbed in "modern times".

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