

# **HOLY CROSS SISTERS: Servants of the Gospel in Education and Evangelization**

## **OUR IDENTITY AND MISSION**

On Saturday 24 February 2024 Pope Francis reminded Spanish Catholic educators that the Church is called to promote an inclusive education, where all students can unleash their potential regardless of their background, recalling that this has always been an essential part of its educational mission.

“Education is, above all, an act of hope in those before us (...), in their possibilities to change and contribute to the renewal of society”, the Pope said.

As a Sister of the Holy Cross engaged in teaching in a London Catholic Secondary school, I welcome Pope Francis’ understanding of education as an act of hope in the potential in young people to contribute their gifts to the transformation of society. But we must also bear in mind that this is not enough. In a secularized society especially, a Catholic school is in the service of the Gospel, by means of its commitment to evangelization and education. To explain this, I will outline one feature of the London secularized social context.

Research published in 2023<sup>1</sup> has shown that for a substantial number of secondary school pupils in London the Catholic School is currently the sole experience of the Catholic Church they have or will have. Moreover, Mr. Stubbings, the head-teacher of Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School in London, where I teach, acknowledged at a recent staff-conference that a high percentage of pupils in this Catholic School do not go to Mass on Sundays. Furthermore, an increasing number of young people are deeply anxious; they are asking: “what life is all about, and why they are here on earth”. I would now like to turn to an account given of a pupil’s loss of belief in the existence of God, along with a development.

At a recent parents-teachers-online evening meeting at which I was present as a member of staff, the mother of a seventeen-year old, girl-pupil to whom I teach Epistemology, told me that I had been instrumental via my classroom-teaching in restoring her daughter’s faith in God. Apparently this pupil had ceased to believe in the existence of God for a couple of years already. I had not known about this and I was fully taken by surprise. Moreover, I teach philosophy and not theology: as such I concentrate on developing intellectual potential in the pupils, in the context of introducing them to critically read and analyse some of the works of philosophers in the Western tradition.

From the time of my conversation with this parent, I have been petitioning God, each day, that this seventeen year old girl comes to know Him as “the good Father”, and Jesus Christ His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives life-giving Enlightenment which empowers us fragile human beings to believe in God and to trust Him (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is the Spirit who builds a bridge between every generation of Christians and the Christ Event which took place in history. The Holy Spirit is the Transforming Presence!

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