



**CONGREGAZIONE delle SCUOLE di CARITÀ
ISTITUTO CAVANIS**

J. M. J.

Il Preposito Generale

CIRCULAR 02 MAY 2020

“Constantes estote, et videbitis auxilium Dei super vos” (2 Chronicles 20,17)

Dear Cavanis Family,

In the occasion of the 218th Anniversary of the Cavanis Institute I would like to share with you some reflections about our charismatic mission. This year we commemorate also the bicentenary of the first Cavanis community, with the beginning of the novitiate in August 27, 1820. The “Semana Cavanis” is an occasion that we have to celebrate our common vocation, to grow in the conscience of nature, goal, Spirit and Indole of our Institute, to celebrate the significant events of our history, doing memory of the marvelous that God in His Providence made with generosity. This year the celebration is darkened by the world situation of the pandemic COVID-19 that is provoking many deaths and sufferings and putting to the test the political structures, economics and socials in all continents. The majority of the world population in this moment is in social isolation and the humankind is entering in the “eyes” of the storm. Regards the forecast, if there will not be something extraordinary, we will face one of the biggest challenges of the last decades. The insecurity about the future is great. Nobody knows how to predict with the minimum of credibility how it will be the world after this pandemic time. What seems to be consensus is that nothing will be like before, for good or bad. In some countries where the charism is present the corona virus add the sufferings already difficult with armed conflicts, extreme misery, institutional bankruptcy and others diseases that every year make thousands of victims. I ask fervently to each Cavanis be attentive to *sign of the times* and in the light of the word of God so we can discern what the Lord asks us. The assurance that we may have comes from Him: *“You will have trouble in the world; but, courage! I have overcome the world.”* (Jo 16, 33). To understand better the moment that we are passing through I send as attachment some text that I consider relevant.

I wish that every territorial part celebrate the best they can this special week.

The foundation of a Marian Congregation by the Cavanis brothers in the Saint Agnes Parish, an association of young people that was present in many other cities on that time, is the result of a long preparation that nothing is improvised. We know the solid Christian education that the parents of our founders provided. The last words of count John to his sons was not to forget the love for their mother and take care of the poor’s.

The culture that they had received didn't distance them from the difficult reality that was passing through the great Venice of the last centuries. They had eyes to see and ears to hear the suffering and the groan of a great number of children and youth without any perspective and horizons. The future educators were educated in the Divine Pedagogy that conducts them little by little to discover their true vocation. From the particular lessons, most of the cases free, from the maternal house, the youthful Marian association went in the Parish.

Two years later the first free public school of Venice became welcome home for the girls and beginning of the religious institute. The many initiatives had the entire goal to offer the best education to the children and youth.

The guidelines of all the initiatives and the heart of the Cavanis mission is the formation to a Christian life (Const. n. 46). An instruction even very good but without commitment with the evangelical values only add the problems of mankind. The Cavanis brothers were conscious that without education is not possible to overtake the poverty and its causes. They were convinced that a true education takes into account the instruction of the mind and the formation of the heart. The third chapter of our Constitutions talks about our apostolate.

They are principles rooted in the experience of the Institute which need to be incarnated with wisdom and audacity. To be faithful and effective in our charism of educators it's necessary and urgent to know profoundly the recipients, the context and the challenges of today about the education of the youth. May I suggest three documents of the ecclesial magisterium: *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Christus Vivit* of Pope Francis. The last one is the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education: *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*. These are instruments that should be known deeply and applied with all the religious and lay people working in our mission in the different territorial parts, in the meetings of the counsel, family chapter, general offices and intermediate offices and in the assemble of majors superiors.

We value the five virtues of the educator exalted by Fr. Anthony which help us to understand the beauty and the importance to be educator. The *patience*, the *vigilance*, the *solicitude*, the *hope of fruits* and the *prayer* (POSITIO AMC, CXV) need to be accompanied of a serious specialization in the different fields of the formation and to teach in the not easy task of education (Const. n. 48/a). All the means considered effectives and opportune should be utilized in the mission of education: the catecheses, the spiritual direction, healthy and formative recreations, associations of youth, the Medias, spiritual exercises (Const. n. 52, 54 and 54/e).

The school was recognizes constantly by our Funders and by the Tradition of the Institute as the principal way to reach the formation of the youth (Const. n. 48).

This reality is undergoing to a profound transformation: "*However, we should not forget that learning does not take place exclusively within schools: in the current context, which is strongly characterized by the pervasiveness of new technological languages and new opportunities for informal learning, schools have lost their traditional educational primacy. Our contemporary age has been defined as the age of knowledge. Today, people talk about the knowledge-based economy.*"

*On the one hand, young people are required to achieve unprecedented learning levels and abilities; on the other hand, schools have to deal with scenarios where information is more broadly available, in massive and uncontrollable amounts. Some degree of humbleness is necessary when considering what schools are able to do in times like these, when social networks are becoming more important, and learning opportunities outside of schools are increasingly widespread and impactful. Since schools are no longer the only learning environment for young people, and not even the most important one, and virtual communities are acquiring a remarkable importance, schooling must face a new challenge: that is, helping students develop the necessary critical tools to avoid being dominated by the power of new media”. (Congregation for Catholic Education. *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* III, 1/d, 2014).*

The Pope Francis in the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “*Querida Amazonia*” reminds us that *the kerygma, which is “the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another”*. It proclaims a God who infinitely loves every man and woman and has revealed this love fully in Jesus Christ, crucified for us and risen in our lives. Without that impassioned proclamation, every ecclesial structure would become just another NGO and we would not follow the command given us by Christ: “Go into the entire world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). Any project for growth in the Christian life needs to be centered continually on this message, for “all Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma”. The fundamental response to this message, when it leads to a personal encounter with the Lord, is fraternal charity, “the new commandment, the first and the greatest of the commandments, and the one that best identifies us as Christ’s disciples” (n. 64 and 65). In the forth chapter of the *Christus Vivit* we can find a rich reflection that help us to understand this aspect essential of the formation.

The concern of Fr. Anthony: “God forbid us that when starting a work for the poor we end up like so many others which finish working only with the rich” (Positio AMC, p. 510), we can add what Pope Francis said about the Church be transformed in one ONG that loose his principal objective that is Evangelize. We have the great responsibility to ask ourselves if our structures and apostolate are at the service of the Gospel. And if our vocation is to be more fathers than masters, which we transform ourselves in mere administrative persons what should be a bigger contradiction. To the clerical male institutes the one more concern is regard to clericalism in religious life: “Theological and ecclesiological reflection on the figure and function of religious presbyters, especially when they accept a pastoral service remains open” (Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life – CIVCSVA, *New Wine in new Wineskins*, N. 23, 2017). We easily forget the criteria that our Constitutions give to assume the parish ministry (n. 62), among witch that religious responsibility of such service is entrusted to the religious community (n. 62/b). The sacrament of Order must be experienced by those who received it according to the charism. A divorce can’t be acceptable. There are no two classes of religious. “Much will be required of the one who has been given much” (Lc 12, 48). The same way there is not elite baptized. A preacher once said that the Christian should not be better than the others but better for the others. “There are those who think that what distinguishes the priest is power, the fact that he is the highest authority in the community. Yet Saint John Paul II explained that, although the priesthood is considered ‘hierarchical’, this function is not meant to be superior to the others, but rather is ‘totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members’ ” (*Querida Amazonia*, n. 87).

Special attention must be paid to the point that our Constitutions treat as missionary apostolate. If the Church is missionary by nature as remind us the Decree of the Council Vat. II *Ad Gentes* n.02, all baptized are missionaries. It's evident that the Spirit precedes us, and that the seeds of the Verb are spread all over the world. From the expression "Mission Ad Gentes" (to bring the Gospel to non baptized), we go to the "Mission inter Gentes" (share the values of the Gospel).

From the attitude that only offer, we discover that the missionary is also evangelized. It's a two-way road. The Congregation welcome with good will the invitation of the Church to extend her action where the necessities of instruction and Christian formation of the youth are great and urgent, reminding that the Congregation was created especial for the education of the youth poor and abandoned (n.50 and 61). Where we can find the majority of our children and youth poor and abandoned? Can we see them? Why all of us accept easily that we are missionaries but in the reality there is a great difficulty from the superiors to find religious available for some regions and activities? It's dangerous to feel safe living in sandcastles, deluded that we are the masters of time and circumstances, feeding affective dependencies of activities, things and persons. Our vow of obedience was not done under condition. We cannot be obedient when our will and personal interests prevail. Always faithful to what the Church proposes as an evangelical obedience, we did not enter to the religious life to continue the same life as before. The availability is the trust in Christ that calls us to go in deep waters (Lc 5, 4).

More than two centuries of Cavanis history. How much well done and received, many lives put into service until the last breath, how many prayers, supplications, challenges, danger, tears and laughs! If we got here was not for our own merits. To move forward we need the grace. We are sitting on the exam bench. The young people watch us. The moment requires great sacrifices.

Fr. Mark had the motto to fight hard until the war ended. (Positio AMC, p. LXXXII). We exist as Cavanis Religious Life to ensure welcome, education, the care and the formation of children and youth, especially the poorest (Const. n. 3, 2). This is our DNA. Everything should be oriented towards this goal. If with few breads and fishes Jesus quenched a crowd, we offer our poverty that we are and have to quench with the bread of education and the instruction the little one that the Divine Providence gave us. But we give all. We can't do anything without Him and He wants to need us. (Jo 15, 5).

That the spiritual and pedagogical heritage left by our venerable founders be admired assimilated and serve as an inspiration to find new answers to the challenges that arises. We will not lack anything if we live according to our vocation: "*set your heart first on the kingdom and justice of God, and all these things will also be given to you*" (Mt 6,33).

Our beloved Mother Mary who never ceases to help those who implore her in needs, help us to live in deep communion with her son Jesus, renewing each day the "yes" of our consecration that animated the lives of the Servants of God Fr. Anthony and Fr. Mark Cavanis. SOLA IN DEO SORS.

“If we truly love God, let us communicate to others the abundance of our love”.
(P. Basilio Martinelli, Positio BM, n. 139, p. 500)

N.B.:

POSITIO AMC: Positio of the Venerable Servant of God Fr. Anthony and Mark Cavanis

POSITIO BM: Positio of the venerable Servant of God Fr. Basilio Martinelli.

Roma, 02 May 2020 – 218th Anniversary of the Cavanis Institute

(traduzione dall'Originale in Lingua Portoghese a cura di P. José Valdir Siqueira)



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