

## Interfaith dialogue in Italy: a school project suggestion

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### Abstract

Italy is a predominantly Christian country. The majority of the population is Catholic but there are an increasing number of different Christian denominations. Many of those who belong to the different Christian churches believe in the importance of dialogue and in the encounter between people. Every year there is an increase in ecumenical, inter-faith and interreligious activities. The Earth Safeguard Day is one of these initiatives organized to deal with social and religious themes. The Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy developed a project called LINFA whose aim is to promote intercultural, interdenominational and intergenerational dialogue inside and outside churches. This article will discuss some ecumenical and interdenominational activities and suggest how the LINFA project could be applicable in schools.

**Keywords:** interreligious dialogue, LINFA project, ecumenical, religious freedom in Italy, laity

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### Introduction

Italian law makes provision that one to two hours a week are reserved for Catholic religious teaching (IRC<sup>1</sup>) in all public schools (depending on type of school<sup>2</sup>). Despite this religious teaching being optional in law, only few schools provide alternative activities for those students who choose to opt out of Catholic religious teaching. In 2013, 88,9%<sup>3</sup> of students decided to follow IRC, this means that 11,1% of students probably belong to different religions or to no religion. In the light of this data, we can say that the school may be an appropriate place for

training in dialogue. Within school, children begin to meet and to deal with diversity. However, without support this encounter may not evolve in the best way.

It is important to educate pupils to the importance of dialogue. Dialogue is a two-way communication between persons<sup>4</sup> and it involves the openness to exchange.

The academic debate on interreligious dialogue is very rich in Italy. Nevertheless it doesn't currently involve school programs. Until 2008 an interreligious council existed in Rome that had an agreement with schools and conducted interreligious teaching in the schools. This project ended when Rome's local government changed.

### Interfaith dialogue

Religious dialogue is a vital necessity on a personal level, because it allows the intellectual and spiritual growth of the individual. The interreligious dialogue tends to develop a bilateral knowledge. It is made to establish friendly relationships, in order to facilitate the spiritual progress of each individual. According to Raimond Panikkar<sup>5</sup> (2013) the dialogue among religions, to be effective, must be genuine. The dialogue is also necessary for the religious traditions, since these were born, grew and evolved thanks to mutual cross-fertilization. For example, a lot of Christian traditions originally belonged to pagan rites. Religious dialogue is also historically necessary, because civilization and the peace of nations come from the dialogue among religions and their degree of coexistence. Starting to teach the richness of plurality and dialogue in the schools is important to empower children and young people to develop a strong sense of ethics.

Panikkar (2013) describes the characteristics that a good dialogue should have, especially if it is cross-cultural and/or inter-religious. Students learning the importance of dialogue should interiorize those characteristics. It should be *open*, i.e.: no individual or topic can be excluded. The dialogue must also remain open to new experiences. Teaching pupils to be open minded is useful not only for their social life, but also for their studies. People should be ready to re-establish and change their frameworks of thought. Schools should view dialogue as a *continuous* and constant process to ensure growth and should not attempt to resolve conflicts only in situations of emergency. A good dialogue should be first of all *internal*, interior, starting from a personal question, which touches the bottom of the heart of the partners' dialogue, developed at the root of reality. The dialogue should be *mythical*, it should evolve through the word, the story, the narration - from *mythos* to *logos*. It passes from a metaphysical explanation to justify the sacred. So the dialogue

should be linguistically rich in *logos*. It should be a *dualogós* (dialogue from two voices). The dialogue must be both *religious* and *political*. Good dialogue contributes to the refinement of religions, because it avoids extremism by supporting comparison between people. The dialogue is in itself a religious act. The word religion, indeed, belongs to Latin *religare* that means tie or bind. Dialogue should be political because it doesn't concern a private matter, but *polis*. It is a practice full of theories that produces new contents. It contains political arguments and so, if properly cultivated, contributes to the goodness of the whole community. The dialogue should be *integral*, characterized by a liturgical nature, with a holistic approach and should play a cosmic role aimed at the goodness of all humanity. Finally, the dialogue should be *unfinished*: i.e. it should be approached as a continuous process, Trinitarian - that is always composed of a thesis, antithesis and synthesis - and structurally flawed. This detailed description of the features that a dialogue should have, combined with the description of the process that leads to the positive transformation of the conflict, should be clarified for all those who wish to promote discussion and dialogue between cultures for the construction of a better society.

### **The three responses of encounter: indifference, curiosity and closure**

People can react in different ways when they first encounter someone or something new. Encountering diversity and the unpredictable can generate three distinct reactions: indifference, curiosity or closure. Indifference may seem the most innocuous of the three reactions, but it can create apathy and disregard. As Elie Wiesel says: "Indifference is today the peril threatening mankind, even more than hatred"<sup>7</sup>. Indifference leads to considering the others as unequal. This means that they lose their connotation of being human, and therefore their dignity. They can be ignored even when they are in need. We are no longer able to realize the severity of the problems of the world because we get used to considering them as normal. So we need to be very careful when judging indifference as something innocuous.

The second reaction, curiosity, must be considered as being a real and genuine interest and not as an inquisitiveness that leads to study the others like an entomologist studies insects. When curiosity leads us to ask questions and seek answers, it is the most desirable of the three reactions. It fosters contact and dialogue with someone we meet, allowing us to create a constructive relationship and a real and interested comparison. As the pedagogue Paulo Freire says we should pass from ingenuous curiosity to the epistemological one. Freire (1998, p. 44) writes:

Thinking critically about practice, of today or yesterday, makes possible the improvement of tomorrow's practice ... In addition, the more I acknowledge my own process and attitudes and perceive the reasons behind these, the more I am capable of changing and advancing from the stage of ingenuous curiosity to epistemological curiosity.

The final reaction to discuss is closure. Closure is the most common and the most damaging of the three reactions. Closure comes from the fear of losing, modifying or harming one's own identity. When someone gets in touch with something or someone else who breaks their categorization schemes they close themselves to avoid facing a possible change and loss of features of their identity and culture.

As Amartya Sen<sup>8</sup> says the uniquely partitioned world is much more divided than the universe of plural and diverse categories that shape the world in which we live. It goes not only against the old-fashioned belief that "we human beings are all very much the same", but also against the less discussed but much more plausible understanding that we are *diversely different*. The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to great extent in a clearer understanding of the plurality of human identity, and in the appreciation that identities intersect with each other and work against a sharp separation along one single hardened line of impenetrable division (2006, p. XIV).

We are diversely different: it means, without originality, that normality doesn't exist. Normality is a relative concept, but do we have a real understanding that what is the norm for one group may not be the norm for another group? We are not talking about relativism; we are talking about epistemological analysis of the world in which we live.<sup>9</sup>

Fear of change and the constant avoidance of proceeding with an epistemological analysis before producing a judgment are the main impediments to the integration process in Italy. This happens because schools programs rarely encourage the exercise in different patterns of thought and cultural approaches.

### **Law and religion freedom**

In Italy, the challenge of dialogue is not only about the encounter between the different nationalities, but also about the encounter between religions and cultures.

The Caritas Dossier Migrantes of 2008 states that in 2008, 91.6% of the Italian resident population was Christian and the majority of them<sup>10</sup> belonged to the Catholic denomination (85.67% of the population). Although Italy is predominantly Christian, there is a growing and important dimension of religious and de-

nominal diversity. The religious diversity in Italy is caused by the continued growth in the number of people belonging to other nationalities and beliefs, and the denominational diversity is caused by the wide variety of Christian denominations in Italy. It is very difficult to quantify the memberships of the various communities of faith because only some of the recorded figures or data can be authenticated. Most of the information available is derived from projections from national or local data (Naso & Salvarani, 2012, p. 343). Comparing CESNUR's and CENSIS's data relating to beliefs in 2012 there are significant inconsistencies. For example, CESNUR states that there are 115,000 Muslim people (0,19% of Italian population) while according to CENSIS there are 1.200.000 Muslim people (2,02% of Italian population).

Table 1. *Religious believers in Italy in 2012*

| RELIGION/DENOMINATION | CESNUR'S DATAS | CENSIS'S DATAS 46TH REPORTAGE | GARDIOL'S DATAS "OSARE IL PROTESTANTESIMO" PIECE |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Catholics             | 92,4%          | 63,8%                         |  |
| Catholic dissidents   | 0,04%          |                               |  |
| Jewish                | 0,06%          | 0,5%                          |  |
| Orthodox              | 0,18%          |                               | 2,18%  |
| Evangelical           |                |                               | 0,92%  |
| Protestant            | 0,73%          |                               | 0,11%  |
| Jehovah's witnesses   | 0,69%          |                               | 0,5%   |
| Mormons               | 0,04%          |                               | 0,04%  |
| Others christians     | 0,008%         |                               |  |

|                          |        |       |       |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Muslim                   | 0,19%  | 2,02% | 2,02% |
| Baha'i                   | 0,006% |       |       |
| Hindu                    | 0,04%  | 0,19% | 0,19% |
| Buddhist                 | 0,23%  | 0,3%  | 0,3%  |
| Osho's                   | 0,06%  |       |       |
| Sikh                     | 0,01%  |       |       |
| Other oriental religions | 0,003% |       |       |
| New Japanese religions   | 0,005% |       |       |
| Esoteric                 | 0,025% |       |       |
| Human potential movement | 0,05%  |       |       |
| Agnostics                |        |       | 15,8% |

Despite conflicting figures, it is clear that Italy is a multicultural country and so dialogue is important.

The Italian Constitution supports the principle of religious freedom in several articles. For example the third article establishes that all citizens are equal without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions.

Although the seventh article establishes the separation between Church and State it also attributes to the Catholic Church a particular sovereignty. This is not granted to other confessions and it is an anomaly in a democratic state, where, ar-

guably, no specific religion should be regarded as sovereign over the other. In fact, the 8<sup>th</sup> Article says that

All religious confessions are equally free before the law. Religious confessions other than the Catholic one have the right to organize themselves in accordance with their own statutes, provided that these statutes are not in conflict with Italian law. Their relations with the State are regulated by law on basis of agreements between the State and respective representatives.

Article 19 states

All persons have the right to profess freely their own religious faith in any form, individually or in associations, to disseminate it and to worship in private or public, provided that religious rites are not contrary to public morality.

The Italian Constitution appears very to be open to cultural and religious diversity and seems to ensure respect for citizens of all orientations. In contrast with the content of those articles, religious life may not be simple for non-Catholic people in Italy. All school programmes (at all levels) contain one hour a week of Catholic religion teaching. This is not a problem *per se*, if it were not for the fact that even if students can chose to be exempt from this teaching, alternative teaching is often not guaranteed. Students are often forced to spend the ‘empty’ hours with no supervision at all, because there are no funds to guarantee alternative activities.

Another example of lack of respect for religious freedom is represented by the many municipal councils that prevent the conversion of the use of old buildings for places of worship. They are effectively obstructing the establishment of non-Catholic churches, mosques and temples. Italian legislation provides tax privileges for buildings used as places of worship. The denial of the conversion of buildings has a negative impact on the rights of religious minorities, they are not giving equal opportunity to freely practice their own creed.

As we have seen there is a gap between what is established in the law and what happens in everyday practice. This is possible because the moral and ethical prescriptions in the Constitution are only theoretically binding in legislation. Every branch (administrative, public, criminal, civil) of law has its own code. There is an ecclesiastic code, which only covers the Catholic church and those confessions that have entered into an agreement with the state. Up till now, it has not been possible to replace these norms with new ones allowing for equality of treatment for all religious confessions. This would be a necessary step to meet the new social needs protecting and promoting the fundamental rights of all people on Italian

soil. Many bills have been proposed over the year to this effect, but they have never been ratified because of opposition generated by Catholic interests and general disregard for the issue. The absence of a comprehensive law on religious freedom makes the single agreements between the state and the various confessions the only model for engaging with the needs of religions.<sup>11</sup>

The Catholic Church still exercises considerable influence in Italy but there are signs that ecumenical initiatives are being increased under the leadership of Pope Francis. There have also been many people promoting religious freedom within the Catholic Church. Panikkar (2013) argues that our current problems in the field of justice, peace and ecology require a mutual understanding among people of the world, which is unthinkable without dialogue.

Every year, in Italy and throughout the world, initiatives are promoted that encourage interdenominational and interreligious dialogue. The Earth Safeguard Day is one of these. During this Day various Churches cooperate to make the population aware of the issue of environmental protection as a Christian mission. This initiative was born in 1983 following the invitation by CEC (Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese i.e. Ecumenical Council of Churches) for the commitment of all the Churches in a process promoting justice, peace and integrity of creation. The same invitation was forwarded to the Churches also by KEK (Konferenzen Europäischer Kirchen i.e. European Churches Conferences) and CCEE (Consiglio delle Chiese Episcopali in Europa i.e. European Council of Episcopal Conferences) during the first Ecumenical Assembly held in Basel, entitled “Peace in Justice”. The international initiative relies upon local organization for local events within nations. As a consequence the involvement of representatives of non-Christian religions depends on the sensitivity of the local diocese. This year the theme was “Educate to safeguard Creation” and has involved many schools in activities. National Operative Plans (PON) use national and European funds to organize extra-curricular programs to examine specific themes in depth. The project we will describe and discuss could be insert into a PON program.

### **The LINFA project and its implication for school projects**

The Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy launched a project called intercultural - Being Church Together (ECI) in 2000 to develop integration strategies within the evangelical Churches. Examining the individual projects, it becomes clear that some of these can be easily modified to fit into intercultural promotion programs within schools. The ECI program deals with the organization of training conferences and with the study and the processing of data. It offers advice



to those structures engaging with intercultural themes.<sup>12</sup> LINFA is the main project currently sponsored by FCEI for integration and intercultural and interdenominational dialogue. The name LINFA<sup>13</sup> is very evocative, it refers to the vital substance of plants. As sap, this project would like to become vital for the spiritual nourishment and cultural growth of the Churches. At the same time LINFA is an acronym for *Laboratorio Interculturale Formazione Accoglienza*.<sup>14</sup> The project was created to address the issue of cross-cultural integrated communities of historic Protestantism, with the hope of providing tools for dialogue and integration within the communities. Those tools can be used also in the rest of the society. This is a workshop that uses animation methods based on the criterion of cooperative learning, rather than as an academic course. The use of the methods of cooperative learning means that this can be easily translated into a school project.

It is aimed at Italian and foreign members of the Adventist, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal and Waldensian churches who are interested in promoting the integration processes for religious and civic communities.

There are more than 70 participants comprising of students, tutors<sup>15</sup> and the control room staff<sup>16</sup>. They are varied and heterogeneous, composed of a balanced number of men and women, adults and young people, Italians and migrants (although the latter are slightly in the majority). The participants are from Italy, Ghana, Romania, South America, Nigeria, Cameroon, France, Germany and Switzerland. The goal of LINFA is the training of church members to help them understand the problems that can arise from the encounter among different cultures, to study and develop strategies for the resolution of any conflicts.

This project was created and inspired by a larger project called Miracle<sup>17</sup> (Models of Integration through Religion, Activation, Cultural and Learning Exchange) that started in December 2008. The Miracle was activated in response to the CCME and CEC for the establishment of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The Commission asked the European Christian Churches to engage in an active way for the reception of migrants and listen to their voices, especially within communities, empowering them to promote “the active participation of migrants in decision-making processes within the churches and in society at large”. The ideas proposed in the initiative were: to increase the visibility of the work promoted by the churches in the context of immigration according to the biblical message and the promotion of inclusive policies at European and national level for minorities, migrants and refugees. The Miracle project was based on the Win Act method promoted by a network of seven European institutes of adult education and was funded by the EU SOCRATES Grundtvig.<sup>18</sup> Miracle incorporates the results of the POLITIS project in a training program to

“train the trainer” in order to promote the active participation of migrants. One of the aims of the Win Act was the formation of educators:

The workshops should make participants familiar with the methodology in order to train new trainers who will then be able to organise other workshops in their own contexts and realities.

The projects are characterized by a strong Biblical dimension, in which the conflict is examined from the Gospel message and the participants try to work out solutions remembering the Christian message, “Love your neighbour as yourself”. Although the projects are intended for an adult public, these activities, once they achieve their objectives, can easily be used for a younger audience. Love is a universal value and a school program can examine how every religion talks about love in their holy books.

The LINFA project leaves out the academic side of the lectures, preferring the use of dynamic activities that help participants to engage. In particular tutors expend a lot of energy to create activities that would include the use of the senses to ensure that the experiences and reflections accomplished are internalized. One of the most common methods is the use of a role-playing game: the interpretation of a role, which is not the participant’s normal role allows the identification of latent prejudices of which they were not aware. It is essential that role-playing games are managed by qualified and competent operators to avoid the occurrence of conflict situations, it is also important that at the end of the game the roles assumed in the simulation are not continued to obviate further conflicts.

### **School project proposal**

A project that could be inserted into the school curriculum could relate the study and understanding of the most common values of all religions: such as love for the neighbour, respect for others, charity, generosity and non-violence. Below I will propose an example of an educational program for primary school.

General objectives:

- Stimulate the curiosity towards the others
- Promote discussion and dialogue among cultures
- Deconstruct religious prejudices
- Emphasize the importance of laity

Specific objectives:

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- Deepen the mutual relationship and progress in reciprocal acceptance
- Show the similarities among cultures
- Deepen the knowledge of each community theoretical basic and praxis
- Highlight the common values among religions
- Promote dialogue, solidarity and peace culture
- Promote dialogue on issues of common interest in relation to the interaction with social society
- Encourage children to produce some ideas including a set of guidelines on the benefits of intercultural cities
- Promote the protection of worship, religion and faith freedom and show commitment against all forms of religious discriminations<sup>19</sup>

Users:

- Six primary school classes from six different schools located in a same city.
- Six teachers, members of the board of the project, which could or would address the implementation of projects during curricular activities.

Length:

One year

Description of the project:

The program includes an initial phase of intercultural training for teachers for a period of two months. It will be useful to highlight the project's objectives and to provide the tools for the management of the activities in the classroom. During the training teachers should take an active part in the planning of activities. Their support for the project will be essential for success as they have a good understanding of the background of the pupils and the skills that are required. Involving teachers in the planning phase can also be useful because they will feel that they are a part of a bigger program and this will motivate them to contribute to the success of the program. The educator is not an instructor but rather a guide who structures the learning process by organising learning activities. This process helps everyone, students and teachers, to develop together and question their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

In the second phase of the project some schools will be selected - some schools that are characterized by a low proportion of migrant pupils and some other schools with a greater balance of indigenous and migrant pupils. The choice of this particular method aims to foster dialogue and cooperative learning among children. Comparing themselves and their different situations will allow them to gain awareness of different experiences. Once the classes have been selected, the

program will be commenced and it will be carried out at class level and school level. Every two weeks students will engage with activities aimed at achieving the objectives, such as role-playing games in which each team plays the role of members of a different religion in a relevant situation; the reading of graphic novels whose subjects deals with those values common to religions, brainstorming.<sup>20</sup> Once every two months, the children of the different schools meet each other in the afternoon, to perform common tasks such as guided tours to places of worship, watch documentary films, play themed treasure hunts. At the end of the project there will be an open exhibition in which the work produced by students will be displayed and the children themselves will be able to describe their work.

It is very important to organise all activities well. Facilitators who show themselves to be well organised, fair and honest will build trust with pupils, and help ensure that participants will happily be part of the activities that are laid out for them.

This program should be considered as an on-going process of individual and collective learning that promotes a constructive way of living together on a global and plural world. With deepened understanding, cultivated moral intelligence and critical thinking, children will be better equipped for the challenge of making the best choices in a world with a great variety of influences and options.

Using this project in schools can have a positive impact on the wider community. The school has been, and in some parts of world still is, a community centre, where people come together for activities, planning, meetings and sharing ideas. Schools can therefore be an effective area for community building and learning, enabling us to respect and understand one other better.

The first linking element between these projects is in the timing: in both projects we have a micro, meso and macro level. The second common part is the project role: students, tutors and the board. The third<sup>21</sup> *trait d'union* is in the aims: promoting respect and dialogue about diversity. This project was conceived in the belief that in today's society the role of the school is to train tomorrow's citizens, called to re-negotiate and build a new society and new rules of coexistence; it is therefore increasingly necessary they have the knowledge of the key elements of religions: in fact, it is evident how religious illiteracy leads to a kind of democratic illiteracy (Zappella, 2012, p. 232, auth. trans.). We should start to prioritise dialogue in our lives. As the priest Scottornola (2002) said

Interreligious dialogue formation and education, or friendly association with people belonging to other religions needs first of all to try to create a general understanding that dialogue is good, beautiful and positive. We should not underline the negative aspect. We have to emphasize the elements that link us and encourage friendship and collaboration rather than those elements that divide us. (p. 144)

### Small vocabulary of interreligious dialogue

Professor Salvarani (2008a) in his book “Vocabolario minimo del dialogo inter-religioso. Per un’educazione all’incontro tra le fedi”<sup>22</sup> talks about a pedagogy of interreligious dialogue (p. 15). He gives us some useful keywords for teaching the value of meeting, and he adds that we should have those keywords clear in mind to improve the dialogue. Those words help us to use a new and less self-centred vocabulary. Those terms can be hard to use without falling in relativism. The first word is *identity*, which is firmly linked to difference. The knowledge of our origins, our identities and our values is necessary to understand and respect our neighbour. We have a fluid identity that changes in the meeting with the others. Salvarani (2008a) says that we don’t need to abdicate our identity to arrange encounter with the other, but we need to invest in a pedagogy of differences (p. 63). We should learn to teach to our children that diversity is a richness that allows us to grow in personality and identity. The second word of this vocabulary is *empathy*. As Karl Rogers teaches, empathy states an emotional, sentimental, skilled participation. It means that people are in touch and share experiences and feeling. Empathy cannot walk without passion. We need fascination to start knowledge and dialogue with diversity. Fascination brings us to the third word: *listening*.

As Schwartz (1995) says we have two kinds of listening:

The first consists in the possession of the other’s speech to put them at the service of our own arguments and interests. The second consists in ‘feel’ the other, understand ‘from where’ he speaks, consists to go in front of him. The first way, unfortunately, is the most common kind of listening. We listen without feeling and we use listening as an alibi to maintain business as usual. We use listening to consolidate the misunderstandings, ‘we thwart who was listened’. He therefore has the impression that ‘he talks to a wall’. (p. 26)

Anthropological listening entails a difference. Only by listening to our neighbour can we accept that we can learn something new from the other. Listening is the non-judgmental relationship with the other. The skill of non-judgement needs a long and exhaustive education. It also needs an authentic and patient training in the search for truth and dialogue. The fourth word of dialogue is *knowledge*. So dialogue belongs to identity and difference, empathy, passion and these elements cannot exist without *knowledge*. As has been discussed above, we cannot meet anybody without getting in touch with him and without a real interest in knowledge.

Dialogue assumes the need to know the other and schools, societies, families and institutions have the task to educate new citizens for positive coexistence with difference. To achieve the purpose we have to learn to put the fifth word into practice: *decentralization*. It consists in considering the others like individuals. We have to appreciate our neighbour as they are and not for what they are not.

The dialogue doesn't question religious identity, but supposes and requests a significant deepening. It needs a difficult decentralization operation. So 'put yourself in the shoes of the other'. This is the overall commitment of those who accept to put themselves in the shoes of the other. This is essential to avoid prejudices and outlook errors. (Salvarani, 2008a, p. 88, auth. trans.)

Decentralization is not simply making assumptions from our euro-central point of view, but it is essential to construct a better world. The sixth word is *acceptance, welcoming*. This word is so abused that sometimes we forget its real meaning. Welcoming is not simply living with, it means living and building something together. Welcoming is the foundation of dialogue and at the same time it is the element that affords us to move from a multicultural to an intercultural society. The last word is the *tale*. Only sharing our story with the other can we find some common elements to build a positive relationship. Telling our story we can understand that who is in front of us it is not so different from us.

To conclude we should work to improve those school activities that encourage comparison and dialogue. We have to fight for the values that permit religions freedom.

The lesson we get is about a "style of commitment" in which freedom is linked with a project of an "active relation" with the reality. We should embrace the provocation to act in the history and feel ourselves responsible of the way of the world. We should stay far from the undeceived and passive acceptance of the facts in which our times seem to blunder. (Bein Ricco, 2005, p. 43, auth. trans.)

So we should consider the values of dialogue and disseminate them. We need to adapt ourselves to the changes in religious environments. We should react to this transformation by creating new fields of education and formation. In this way we allow people to deal with change in a positive and fruitful way.

The essential and unavoidable dialogue is not only a social imperative and historic duty. It is also the awareness that to be ourselves, simply to be, we need to enter in touch, communion, with the earth under us, men on our side and skies over us. (Panikkar, 2001, p. 75, auth. trans.)

We conclude with the words of Panikkar (2001, p. 25, auth. trans.): “Without dialogue, religions tangle themselves or sleep on the mooring. Either they open up themselves to one another or they break down.”

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Insegnamento religione cattolica.

<sup>2</sup> An hour and a half to kindergarten, primary two hours, one hour for secondary degree and second degree.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.chiesacattolica.it/cci\\_new\\_v3/allegati/4662/tav.1%20nazionali.pdf](http://www.chiesacattolica.it/cci_new_v3/allegati/4662/tav.1%20nazionali.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> For more information please read Leonard Swidler’s paper *What is dialogue*. <http://institute.jesdialogue.org/fileadmin/bizcourse/Dialogue.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> He was a Spanish Roman Catholic priest and a proponent of inter-religious dialogue. As scholar, he specialized in comparative religion.

<sup>6</sup> Untranslatable term used by Panikkar

<sup>7</sup> See more on <http://www.wbur.org/2014/02/10/ctie-wiesel-visionaries>.

<sup>8</sup> Indian economist and Nobel Laureate in 1998.

<sup>9</sup> For details, see Waldenfels, B. (2011). *Phenomenology of the Alien: Basic concepts*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Section devoted to census of religions in Italy.

<sup>11</sup> For details, see Ferrari, A. (2012). *La libertà religiosa in Italia, un percorso incompiuto*. Roma: Carocci

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.fedevangelica.it/comm/eci024.php>.

<sup>13</sup> Sap.

<sup>14</sup> Intercultural Workshop for Training and Welcoming.

<sup>15</sup> They organise the local events and meetings.

<sup>16</sup> Board, team responsible for the project.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ccme.be/areas-of-work/uniting-in-diversity/miracle/>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fedevangelica.it/documenti/3/d10c22ddeccaddb1adc070c5064fa236.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Some objectives are inspired on religions forum of Milan program see more on <http://www.forumreligionimilano.org/Home/tabid/53/language/enUS/Default.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.acs-italia.it/joomla/english/common-values-the-meeting-point-between-religions-and-systems-of-secular-thought-through-comics-for-the-integration-of-immigrants.html>.

<sup>21</sup> For further details see chapter 2.2 of Leo B. Hendry, Marion Kloep (2002), *Lifespan Development. Resources, Challengers and Risk*. London: Thompson Learning.

<sup>22</sup> Minimal vocabulary of interreligious dialogue. Education for a meeting among the faiths.

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