

The Greatest Work on Earth

HISTORICAL NOTES:

1. EDUCATION OF THE **POOR IN THE MOST ABANDONED PLACES,**

SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN:

-- BEGINNING WITH ORPHANS

-- FOCUS ON THE POOR:

--TEACHING GIRLS WAS A NEW IDEA

--WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE/ARE MOST EFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

--ITS THE WOMEN WHO WOULD BE THE MOTHERS OF THE NEXT GENERATION: EDUCATE THEM AND YOU ARE EDUCATING THEIR CHILDREN

--OTHER SCHOOLS WERE SET UP TO SUPPORT THE POOR SCHOOLS (I.E. BOARDING SCHOOLS WERE TO SUPPORT THE INNER CITY SCHOOLS)

--IF YOU ARE TEACHING THE NON-POOR IT NEEDS TO BE CONSCIENTIZING ON BEHALF OF THE MATERIALLY POOR.

--POSSIBLE TO HAVE TOO MANY BOARDERS, BUT NEVER TOO MANY POOR CHILDREN

2. EDUCATION AS A PRIMARY **MEANS OF EVANGELIZATION:**

-- PRIMARY PURPOSE OF CHOOSING EDUCATION AS THE FOCUS OF NOTRE DAME MINISTRY: THE RE-EVANGELIZATION OF FRANCE

-- TEACHING OF RELIGION CAME FIRST, THEN THE "LITTLE R'S" OF READING AND WRITING. MATH WAS ADDED LATER.

-- THE SISTERS FIRST CAME TO THE CINCINNATI TO EVANGELIZE THE INDIANS (!!!)

-- STAFFED PARISH SCHOOLS WHICH WERE CRITICAL IN AN ERA OF ANTI-CATHOLICISM

-- 1st two mission areas outside of the Continent were the U.S. and Britain:

both of which were experiencing severe anti-Catholic movements

3. EDUCATION OF THE **INDIVIDUAL:**

--NO MATTER WHAT THEIR NEEDS:

"YOU MAY BE THERE FOR ONLY ONE STUDENT"

1ST SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

PRINTING PRESS FOR THE BLIND

TAKING IN ORPHANS

NIGHT CLASSES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE FACTORIES AND MILLS

SCHOOLS FOR THE EX-SLAVES

MONTESSORRI MATTERS

--MEET THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND TEACH THE STUDENTS WHAT THEY NEED TO BE CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

-- LA GRAND SCIENCE: KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

1. Education affects the individual in that it envisages the full development, both natural and supernatural, of each child

Julie's individual approach was famous.

2. Also affects society: can renew the family unit through the training of mothers of the next Generation

Secondary aims: variable, requiring adaptation to different times and places La petite sciences: intellectual growth, social training, manual skill

4. EDUCATION AS A PRIMARY MEANS OF **SOCIETAL CHANGE:**

5. EDUCATION OF **TEACHERS:**

-- FROM THE BEGINNING PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF THE SISTERS AND THOSE WORKING WITH THEM WAS EMPHASIZED

DISCIPLINE

ORDER

AFFIRMATION (AWARDS ASSEMBLIES)

-- COLLEGES STARTED AS TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOLS

-- FOCUS ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

-- TRAINING OF TEACHERS 4TH VOW FOR THE EARLY SISTERS

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"I beg you again: take the poor, only the poor, the very poorest little girls who can't pay you anything. Gather them in, as many as you can, because we exist first and foremost for them. They are the blessing on our institute."

The spirit of the sisters was one of "simplicity, obedience, and charity, and their desire was to dedicate themselves to the poor in the most abandoned places." (Rule of 1818) (Article 5)

"We are only for the poor, absolutely for them."

Julie, with Françoise as co-foundress, established schools "for the gratuitous instruction of poor children to prepare them for the duties of their state in life and for the sacraments." (Rule of 1818) (Article 6)

"If you have got one or two who are paying fees, send them away. If pupils come who want to pay, be sure that you take nothing from them. Our aim is to teach the poor."

In fidelity to Julie's preference for the poor in the most abandoned places, we choose to stand with poor people as they struggle for adequate means for human life and dignity. (Article 17)

"Do not whittle down the grandeur of the children's Christian vocation! We cannot have anything petty or superficial in our work!"

Through our developing understanding of mission, we search anew in each time and place for ways to spread the Gospel and to take our stand with the poor of the earth. According to our tradition, in all our ministries we value education as fundamental in bringing about the reign of God. (Article 14)

"Only by prayer can our work bear any fruit in the souls of the children"

Julie encouraged in her sisters deep union with God, liberty of spirit, and courage: qualities needed for an apostolic vocation. She frequently reminded them of the words she heard at Compiègne, "Behold the daughters I will give you in the Institute which will be marked by my cross." (Article 4)

"Too much severity is not good in training young people. Later on, so as not to be like you, they will fall into the opposite extreme."

We recognize the call of God in a growing consciousness throughout the world of the dignity and value of each person, race, and nation, and the ways in which society, in its values, structures, and systems, denies this dignity. (Article 20)

"You can do more good by training one good teacher than by looking after a hundred boarders."

We work with others to transform unjust structures and systems as we participate in creating new ways of relating which enable all to experience more fully the goodness of God. (Article 23)

"What the teacher is, is more important than what she does or than what she knows."

As a Congregation encompassing a diversity of peoples and cultures, we want to develop a world-wide perspective which makes our own, wherever we are, the concerns of all people. (Article 26)

"You know, parents will never want to send their children if they think that you are as solemn as a row of nightcaps."

Within the context of local churches, we act responsibly and in cooperation with both the diocesan bishop and the people among whom we work. With them we learn as we teach; we are evangelized as we evangelize. (Article 25)

"What we want is a combination of strength and sweetness, of firmness and gentleness, energy and peace; plenty of effort, courage and activity but without hastiness or fuss...Everything must be done peacefully; that is absolutely necessary with the children...This firm calmness is much more than savoir-vivre and it is not something that you simply acquire by education. It goes very deep and argues a complete possession of one's own soul."

We encourage a style of ministry which enables people to develop a capacity to analyze experience, to recognize the presence of God therein, and to assume responsibility for shaping life according to Gospel values. (Directive 2)

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1. EDUCATION OF THE POOR IN THE MOST ABANDONED PLACES (SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN)

- Pledge to the poor sprang from: Union with God:
- Julie understood that the problem of poverty in her world was not to be solved by revolution. Her experience highlighted for her the necessity of finding a Christian solution that would be permanent, and for it to be permanent it had to be based on the Gospel of Jesus.
- Julie's ability to "see" the poor as children of God due their human dignity was unique. Her respect for the poor was based on her respect for the dignity of the individual child of God.
- Julie understood the task of looking for the presence of God in each person, of seeing the unique giftedness that each individual has to offer to the rest of us, as a Gospel mandate.

2. EDUCATION AS A PRIMARY MEANS OF EVANGELIZATION.

- For Julie the primary aim of education was the knowledge of God.
- To put each child in the way of salvation was the height of Julie's ambition, and she could say with conviction that she would be well satisfied if God had gathered the whole congregation together for the sake of one single soul.
- Salvation was the main aim and motive of Julie's educational work.
- Julie saw evangelization as a privilege. To be engaged in evangelization is to allow one's self to be an extension of the work of Jesus himself, of the apostles and the church.
- Education as a means of evangelization is to be done with great faith.
- Julie would enlist the prayers of the sick sisters for the work in the classroom. In this way she kept the whole congregation united, directly or indirectly, in its single-minded apostolate.

3. EDUCATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL:

- Salvation included the development of each child's natural, God-given gifts.
- Julie saw the nature of education as an individual process of growth and a social process in which the teacher handed on the past to the pupil. Both processes take place simultaneously.
- Julie saw the children with the eyes of faith. Each one had a mixture of good to be encouraged and evil to be checked.
- Curriculum was dictated by the needs of her time and by her own sound common sense, which would not let her plan for advanced work while there was still need to lay the foundations.
- Julie founded poor schools, day schools, academies, evening classes, Sunday schools and a kind of vocational school where older girls who so wished could learn to make a living by sewing or lace-making. There was thus a comprehensive educational pattern in the young congregation by 1816.

4. EDUCATION AS A PRIMARY MEANS OF SOCIETAL CHANGE:

- Her world was in need of societal change:

Devastated by war and poverty

Ignorance and lack of school system

Divorce rate rising, immorality flagrant

Actively anti-religious policies

Spreading materialism which tended to choke Christian principles

Lack of priests after years of persecution created a great need for an apostolic laity

Sense of new age, a new discovery

- Julie saw education as a tool through which her teachers tried to prepare girls for life in a world where their standards would not be understood and where there would be much to militate against them.
- Through her focus on educated the girls who would be the mothers of the next generation, Julie was renewing society by strengthening the Christian family.

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5. EDUCATION OF TEACHERS:

Julie trained her future teachers in 3 ways: as a person, as an educator, as a technician in the classroom.

As a PERSON: she looked for candidates with the right qualities:

- Sincerity of Christian conviction.
- Genuinely Christian and totally committed to the implications of the Christian life would have the right moral influence on developing minds and hearts.
- Know the difference between the letter of the catechism & the life-giving depths of revealed truth.
- Able to communicate the fullness and attractiveness of Christian teaching with the warmth and enthusiasm that came from a personal living of it.
- Firmness, toughness, and courage.
- Steady purpose which would be able to persevere when the children seemed to make no progress or when the accumulation of worries was oppressive.
- Calmness, self-control: consistent in action and able to reflect before giving commands resulting in peace, order, and the right conditions for the children to work in cheerfulness, zest and joy.

As an EDUCATOR Julie looked for candidates who understood teaching involved more than being a good class-mistress:

- Required understanding that education involves the whole person: body and soul.
- Teaching is directed to humanity's final end (unity with God).
- Teaching must be Christ-centered, respecting the supernatural in humans and allowing for the fact of imperfection.
- Teaching should utilize the catechetical process: introduce, explain, apply.
- Professional preparation is matter of justice: academic work is always with a view to teaching and never for its own sake.

As a TECHNICIAN Julie emphasized:

- Lessons, lectures, debates and prepared discussions out of school.
- Small classes, little groups led by small group leaders.
- Periods of practice with demonstration and critique in class.
- Meetings every so often enabled beginning teachers to compare notes with the more experienced teachers.
- Placement of an inexperienced teacher in the charge of someone well used to classwork.
- Teachers understanding that:
 1. Their function in class was to exercise a carefully considered influence on their children.
 2. They were to control and guide their students methodically, leading and stimulating them while at the same time recognizing their dignity and respecting their initiative.
 3. Order and discipline are necessary conditions for learning.
 4. They must rouse in the children willingness to respond to their teaching.
- The atmosphere of schools was to be Christian, homey and efficient.
- Efficiency was a matter of quality not speed: involved order, silence, right use of time, uniform, cleanliness and general happy smooth running of the school. Never judge a school's efficiency only by its examination results!