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The Letter. “The example we must give as teachers”

Dear Editor,

the unexpected delay in reopening secondary schools after the Christmas holidays is unsettling teachers and students. Distance education has triggered some problems that already existed: lack of interest, demotivation and even the risk of early school leaving. No one doubts that going back to school with classroom learning can make all the difference, but certainly it will not be the solution to the problems revealed by the closure of schools.

First of all, as teachers, we would like to acknowledge we too are facing difficulties that are similar to the ones students are experiencing: fear of infection, social withdrawal and flattening of desire.

How can we stand before a boy who has lost one of his relatives because of the pandemic, or who has stopped coming to school after letting himself be taken by apathy and lack of interest? We all had to go back to a vital experience that would let us teach with a glimpse of hope in our eyes.

Pasolini’s words prove to be as relevant as ever: “If someone had educated you, he could only have done so through his being rather than through his speech”. Whether face to face or remote, by being there we can challenge the unease or lack of interest the young ones may feel. Thus, teaching turns back to its original beauty: the freedom of a teacher in dialogue with the freedom of youngsters through everyday contents. As when a teacher picked up a discussion among her students on the meaning of life. “When I was your age, I had the same question, and when the meaning of life knocked at my door, I let it in. The meaning of life will come to you, I can assure you.” A tangible silence filled even that virtual classroom and the lesson continued with both teacher and students with different faces. Or as when, at the end of the last lesson before the holidays, the videos turned off, and then immediately turned on again showing the many “thank you teacher!” cards they had handwritten on the sheets torn from their notebooks. “Why?” The teacher was moved. “Because, during these difficult times, you gave a hundred percent and you wouldn’t have had to... and you’ve always listened to us.”

We are sure that the energy we need in order to face the hardship of the present time and to rebuild our country will come from those glimpses. Young people can already learn this today, by seeing fearless teachers communicating what can give us hope and certainty in the positivity of life.

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