Excerpt from:

**Dialogue as the Future.**

**A Catholic Answer to the 'Colourisation' of the Educational Landscape**

Didier Pollefeyt & Jan Bouwens (KU Leuven), February 2013

… The *recontextualising* type of *Dialogue School…* is more modest, careful, inquisitive, and less convinced of its *a priori* 'being right'. If we want to authentically live out our Catholic faith from within a multicultural setting, we must hold an open, searching and interpretive attitude. The process of encounter and dialogue with otherness is not just an opportunity for proclamation, but also – and more fundamentally – constitutive of one’s own religious understanding, because it is in this encounter and confrontation with the other that God reveals Himself [sic]. It is here that new layers of meaning are opened and faith is recontextualised. Dialogue becomes reciprocal, and both dialogue partners become vulnerable and receptive towards new meanings.

However, it is the theological (epistemological) conviction of this type of *Dialogue School* that the truth of Catholicism is not fixed and cannot *a priori* be known with certainty. The truth must rather be discovered and made true in lives actually lived through a continual process of interpretation. Believers are challenged to search for new insights into what it means to be Catholic in the midst of the present context, and to do so creatively, innovatively, and with an open mind. *Recontextualising Dialogue Schools* are constantly on the search for new ways to express and live the gospel. They are always looking for new ways to make it true today. When we do this, we stand with one foot in the Catholic tradition and the other in an unwritten future. The outcome of this search is uncertain, and it is possible that some valuable things from the past will disappear into the background. Nevertheless, we satisfy ourselves with new discoveries, and hope that the Holy Spirit accompanies us on our journey.

As the world evolves and changes, so do the idea of what it means to be Christian in this world and the way the original evangelical inspiration is given a concrete form. Catholic faith must change her profile and ‘re-contextualise’ herself as she enters each new era. This process of recontextualisation began already in the earliest days of Christianity, and it is now up to us to carry on this tradition in the 21st century. The Catholic tradition has always been developing and renewing itself in a great variety of ways, and it must keep doing this today. Whenever God walks besides us on this path, new revelations come forth, and the faith tradition further unfolds itself.

In order to bring about a *Recontextualising Dialogue School*, it is crucial to have active dialogue with people of other convictions and lifestyles. It is therefore important that many different philosophical and religious visions, practices and lifestyles can exist side-by-side in a Catholic school. It is precisely through recognising, respecting and truly valuing the differences between people that the school can rediscover her *Catholic* identity again. This receptivity towards ‘the other’ is fundamental. It is important to actually meet the other, and this means actually listening to what moves his or her spirit. It is only when we look the other in the eye that we can encounter the face of Christ. When we offer protection and hospitality to strangers, God can reveal Himself [sic] to us in new and unexpected ways.

…The research has shown that, conceptually speaking, people can clearly distinguish between categories of the *Dialogue School* and the *Colourful School*… typical of the Dialogue School is: “My ‘ideal school’ believes that Catholic faith offers a meaningful and valuable message that everyone should hear, albeit without the intent to make all students Catholic.”

An example [from] the *Colourful School* is: “I believe that it is more important to value the many fundamental life options and lifestyles at school (even the non-Christian ones) than to preserve a Catholic school identity.”

The difference is clear: the *Dialogue School* expresses a clear preference for a particular position – namely the Catholic position – out of which to engage others in dialogue.

By contrast, the *Colourful School* assumes a fundamental equivalence of all philosophical and religious positions.

Both school types strive for maximal recognition, appreciation and support for plurality and ‘otherness’ at school, but while the *Colourful School* eliminates any and all expressions of preference, positing a formal equality of all substantial differences (i.e., relativism), the *Dialogue School* holds that one can only enter into true solidarity and dialogue with others in any meaningful way when we do so out of a perspective of Christian faith…