

# origins

CNS documentary service

## Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools

### Congregation for Catholic Education

*“Cultural differences are a richness to be understood as expressions of the human race’s fundamental unity,” the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education says in a new document encouraging intercultural dialogue in Catholic schools. The Congregation released the document, “Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love,” at the Vatican Dec. 19. It says that while Catholic schools have long educated diverse populations, globalization has resulted in growing multicultural realities. The congregation warns against two*

*“Fostering encounters between different people helps to create mutual understanding, although it ought not to mean a loss of one’s own identity.”*

*approaches to teaching pluralism: relativism and assimilation. Relativism, it says, “is founded on the value of tolerance but limits itself to accepting the other person, excluding the possibility of dialogue and recognition of each other in mutual transformation,” while assimilation means that “exchange is reduced to the mere insertion of minority cultures in the majority one, with little or no attention to the other person’s culture of origin.” The congregation calls on Catholic schools to “construct a new intercultural approach that aims at realizing an integration of cultures in mutual recognition.” It also stresses that this approach should in no way downgrade the Catholic identity of the school. The congregation’s document follows.*

It is a fact that today’s society has a multicultural makeup accentuated by globalization. The overlapping presence of different cultures is a great resource as long as the encounter between those different cultures is seen as a source of mutual enrichment. However, significant problems can arise if multicultural society is seen as a threat to social cohesion or as a threat to the protection and exercise of rights pertaining to individuals or groups.

It is not easy to balance and harmonize previously established cultures and new cultures, as the two often demonstrate usages and customs that are mutually opposed. For some time now, multicultural society has been an object of concern for both governments and international organizations. In

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January 23, 2014  
Volume 43  
Number 33