

Education for All

Kevin O'Gorman SMA lives in Cork.

Pope Francis initiates the New Year with the intention 'for the right to an education'. This is general, emphasising a global right that people everywhere, especially children, should enjoy. This may seem like a reasonable expectation in a society where the state has a responsibility to supply education, but it is often a struggle for some families and groups to attain. Reference to 'an education' is a recognition that education is not a matter of a one-size-fits-all approach. The roll out of education requires an evaluation of the needs of students to help them attain their human potential and happiness in life. The Catholic vision of education also embraces the call to holiness.

Historically the Church has played a huge role in providing education to people. Alongside healthcare, many lay faithful, religious and priests have contributed hugely to education both

at home and abroad. Their commitment is seen in the contributions they have made as teachers and administrators in schools and colleges, some spending their whole lives serving in the same place. The sight and story of people coming, often a great distance, to honour their former educators is a joy to behold and a cause of celebration for all concerned.

Pope Francis singles out the plight of education in situations around the world where war is being waged. Here education is often the first casualty of armed conflict. The spectacle of seeing schools shut down and even destroyed as armed forces attack population centres is a horror shown too often on our screens. In some situations education is eroded, even ended on the grounds of gender, geography and greed. The common good is undermined when the right to education is usurped. Pope Francis underlines this in stating that education 'is necessary to build a better world'.

Peace is both the fruit of education and a fertile ground for its flourishing among and between peoples. We pray that the 'right to an education' be extended and exercised by every nation.

Pope's Intention:
For the right to an education.
Let us pray for migrants,
refugees and those affected
by war, that their right to an
education, which is necessary
to build a better world,
might always be respected.

From *Living Prayer* by Kevin
O'Gorman SMA, Messenger
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