
Catholic schools. CSSC: almost 8,000 schools with over half a million pupils. Msgr. Giuliadori, "restart with confidence and renewed commitment in the light of the Global Compact on Education"

The health emergency has brought into sharper focus long-standing disparities in the educational system and led to the discovery of new ones. At the same time, however, it served as an opportunity to consolidate old alliances and create new ones, in line with the [Global Compact on Education](#) promoted by **Pope Francis**. Bringing together divides and alliances is the cornerstone of the **23rd Report on Catholic Schools in Italy**, published every year by the **Study Centre for Catholic Schools** (CSSC) of the Italian Bishops' Conference, released by Scholé at the start of the new school year. "**Post-emergency education**" is the title of the survey, dedicated to the experience of Catholic schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. **A seriously addressed emergency**. This can be seen in the Guidelines that [FIDAE](#) (Federation of Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools) has obtained approval of from the Italian Organisation for Standardisation (UNI) for regulating school life in conditions of emergency and ordinary life, thus providing a useful and concrete tool also for state schools. The findings of the Report suggest that almost only schools in the Centre-North are showing encouraging signs, while the Southern regions still suffer the impact of the crisis, even though *the pandemic - inter alia - seems to have made families rediscover the virtues of Catholic schools*. According to the latest data released by the Ministry of Education, 62.9% of all private schools recognised by the State are Catholic schools, including those that can be described as such under Canon Law and those that describe themselves as Christian-inspired.

There are a total of 7,859 Catholic educational establishments of all types and at all levels (+47 compared to the previous year) serving a total of 544,779 pupils (+2,675 compared to the previous year).

Out of these schools, 5,732 are nursery schools; 1,028 primary schools; 515 secondary schools; 584 secondary schools. The proportion of pupils with non-Italian citizenship continues to grow: 31,116, or 5.7% of the total, as does the number of pupils with disabilities, up to 1.6%, totalling 8,756. There were 54,387 working teachers, another increase compared to the previous year; almost half of them (25,434) were employed in nursery schools, almost 13,000 in primary school, some 8,000 in middle school and more than 8,000 in high school. As regards geographical distribution, almost six out of ten schools (59.7%) are located in the North of Italy. The editors of the Report do not consider this to be a reversal of the trend, however *families' greater trust in Catholic schools is undeniable. The small number of pupils, which has allowed them to be safely distanced, combined with the great dedication to education that has always been a feature of Catholic schools, are all points in favour.*



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. General Ecclesial Assistant at Rome's Cattolica University and President of the Bishops' Commission for Catholic Education, Schools and Universities, *the world of education is facing a "challenging task with no rapid solution, but we must all be engaged" in the " far-reaching project" launched by Pope Francis with the Global Compact on Education. The crisis "can serve as an opportunity for renewal," the bishop said in his remarks for the presentation of the Report, adding that "we can't expect to revert to the way it was before, with its shortcomings and injustices". These aspects " reconfirm the importance of a global compact on education, which entails a renewed commitment for the near future." Insofar as it is concerned, said Msgr. Giuliodori,*

"Catholic schools must embrace the Pope's words and be determined in their efforts to re-establish the educational and cultural model."

Moreover, he added, "Catholic schools can safely say that they have consistently been following at least some of the objectives" suggested by Pope Francis. In fact "the centrality of the human person, the attentive listening to children, the full participation of girls, the recognised educational role of the family and the inclusion of the weakest members of society all form part of our schools' educational programme."

"In spite of grief and personal suffering, we feel optimistic about the future of our schools",



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CSSC scientific coordinator, according to whom “having survived this tragic experience must help us be confident about the prospects for recovery, not in terms of the various material resources available, but in terms of the spiritual strength that has emerged in the most trying moments, and that will accompany us in the years to come.” “The pandemic shock,” he went on, “has forced all schools to reassess their priorities and their working methods.” Alongside painful and trying experiences, “new forms of generosity, solidarity and commitment” have come to the fore.” According to the CSSC coordinator, that’s where we must restart from

“with autonomy and guided by a spirit of subsidiarity.”

Thus school autonomy is the ideal tool for making the most of the human and material resources that have emerged, creating new alliances and rebuilding the school system from past experience. “Nothing will be the same as before,” Cicitelli concluded, “because we now have the tools to move forward more successfully than ever before.”

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