

FROM A VISION TO ACTION: IMPLEMENTING A VISION OF DIALOGUE FROM VATICAN II TO CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS TODAY

Benny Kaippullyparamban Joy[♦]

KU Leuven, Belgium

Abstract

In the spirit of aggiornamento, the Second Vatican Council opened new avenues for the Catholic Church to engage in dialogue with the wider world. This path is notably outlined in documents such as *Gaudium et Spes*, *Nostra Aetate*, and *Gravissimum Educationis*. Among these, the latter (no. 25) specifically emphasises the vital role of Catholic schools in fulfilling the Church's mission and fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between God's people and humanity through dialogue. Extending this idea, the *Congregation for Catholic Education* issued its 2022 directive, *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*, which expresses a clear preference for the so-called 'Catholic dialogue school,' yet lacks clarity regarding its kerygmatic or recontextualising forms. As society becomes increasingly diverse, the question arises whether this 'kerygmatic' form facilitates authentic interreligious learning in Catholic schools and meaningful dialogue with the religious 'other' – people affiliated

[♦] Ordained as a priest for the Archdiocese of Thrissur in 2016, Benny Kaippullyparamban combines pastoral dedication with academic research in Catholic education. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry from St. Thomas College, Thrissur, and studied philosophy at Paurastya Vidyapitham, Vadavathur, Kottayam. During his theological formation at Marymatha Major Seminary, Thrissur, he earned a B.A. and an S.T.B. He completed Advanced Research Masters at KU Leuven (2020-2022), focusing on religious education in Keralite Catholic schools and integrating insights from the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) program at KU Leuven. Currently pursuing doctoral project (2022-2026) under Prof. Dr. Didier Pollefeyt at KU Leuven, Belgium. Email: benny.kaippullyparambanjoy@kuleuven.be

with different world views and religions. This paper begins with a brief analysis of the significance of 'dialogue' in Vatican II, presenting the context and respective approaches to the 'Catholic dialogue school,' particularly the recontextualising Catholic dialogue school (as a complementary or alternative model supported by a reinterpretation of the Church's vision for dialogue). The paper further discusses the implications of shifting from a kerygmatic to a recontextualising Catholic dialogue school, highlighting the move from a correlational to a hermeneutical approach. Finally, it reflects on the implications and possibilities of this shift for Syro-Malabar Catholic schools in the Indian Keralite context.

Key Words: Catholic dialogue schools, Catholic education, Dialogue and Vatican II, Keralite Catholic schools, Hermeneutical-communicative model, Recontextualising Catholic school, Religious value education.

Introduction

Rooted deeply in the theologies of the Second Vatican Council, a great deal of attention has recently been given to the development of the 'Catholic dialogue school' in Belgium with its dialogical pedagogy for religious education (RE). Though RE was not an important theme at the Council, the declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* (GE) did discuss a broad Catholic perspective towards education – however, with a lack of specificity that has led some authors, in line with Joseph Ratzinger, to perceive this document as 'weak'¹. In fact, Mario D'Souza (University of Toronto) observes just one mention of 'religious education' in the whole of GE in the context of 'moral education'².

In a general way, this declaration reflects the Vatican II shift towards inclusivism, calling for 'dialogue' in Catholic schools to promote greater respect and openness towards others³. It states that

¹ Authors like Alan McClelland, Brian Kely and so on). Gerald Grace, "Vatican II and New Thinking about Catholic Education: Aggiornamento thinking and principles into practice", in *Vatican II and New Thinking about Catholic Education: The Impact and legacy of Gravissimum Educationis*, ed., Sean Whittle, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 13-22, 13. Mario O. D'Souza, "The Progression of Religious Education Since the Second Vatican Council as Seen Through Some Church Documents", in *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools*, eds., Michael T. Buchanan and Adrian-Mario Gellel (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 9-22, 9.

² D'Souza, "The Progression of Religious Education", 9.

³ Pope Paul VI, "Declaration on Christian Education: Gravissimum Educationis (October 28, 1965)", no. 25 https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/

“the Catholic school can be such an aid to the fulfilment of the mission of the People of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind, to the benefit of both” (no. 25). Such a statement is very important since the term *dialogue* here immediately implies the inclusive perspective of the Catholic Church towards the non-Catholic ‘others’ reflecting an awareness of the inclusion of ‘others’. Such awareness of the church also concerned that education is also its mission to address this inclusivism in relation to a pluralistic context. Therefore, it is worth attention here to note that the term ‘dialogue’ – and the ways it is being used and can be used in Catholic schools – has seen an evolution over the decades since Vatican II, as have the ways to deal positively with context-specific problems.

To such end, this paper unfolds in four parts: first, the ecclesial-social context for dialogue along with the important shifts in the theological attitude of the Catholic Church towards others as evidenced in light of reflections of several theologians with regard to documents, especially like GS, NA and GE; second, a discussion on the profile of ‘Catholic dialogue school’ (CDS) in schools; third, an evaluation of vision of latest Vatican document (2022) with regard to dialogue applied as differing between its two possible prominent forms such as ‘kerygmatic’ and ‘recontextualising’; and finally, an evaluation of the possibilities for the ‘Catholic dialogue school’ and ‘dialogue’ in the social and ecclesial Syro-Malabar Catholic Indian context of Kerala.

I. ‘Dialogue’ in Vatican II

As found prominently in various documents of Vatican II, the references to ‘dialogue’ reflect a shift in the self-awareness of the Catholic Church away from an exclusive understanding of itself as a ‘privileged religion’ or ‘the one true religion’. Such a shift also presumes a positive openness to developing a relationship with other religions. With this changed perspective in mind, this section briefly addresses the socio-ecclesial framework for the implications of the term dialogue in terms of ‘what’ and ‘why’ for the Council? Such a discussion is also combined with the reflections on important shifts in theological stances involved in ‘dialogue’. In this way, this section draws upon the insights of various theologians like Mathijs

Lamberigts, Leo Lefebure, Matteo Visioli, and Marianne Moyaert based on their insights with regard to documents of Vatican II.

1. Dialogue: Ecclesial-Social Context

According to Lamberigts the evidence for the change in “the Catholic attitude towards the non-Christian religions, religious liberty and the role of the Church in the world of today” is evident in documents like *Nostra Aetate*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, *Ad Gentes* and *Gaudium et Spes*⁴. Putting forth the two kinds of truth claims, such as: 1) “only Truth has the right to exist” and “truth is too rich to be limited to one religion”, he illustrates that earlier the Catholic Church “is more familiar with the first option”⁵. Hence, Lamberigts determines that in earlier centuries the Catholic faith was more inclined towards the truth claim that Roman Catholicism is the only true religion and held baptism as a must for salvation⁶. However, he observes that later, with the advent of Vatican II, such an exclusivist truth claim is *utterly* discontinued⁷. Lamberigts also points to several significant factors that influenced the Council members and their rethinking of the ways (rejecting exclusion) that the Church approaches other faiths: the rise of communism and its impact on Christians (the question of religious liberty of Christians in non-Catholic world), the suffering of Jews during the Second World War, and the Church’s own “rediscovery” of its call to serve the world⁸. The suffering of Jews, especially during World War II, and their attempts for dialogue with others were important topics of discussion during the Second Vatican Council⁹. Lamberigts considers that such a focus on Jewish experiences during the Council expanded to include other faiths and highly influenced

⁴ Mathias Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue, Religious Freedom, Service to the World”, *Eastern Journal of Dialogue and Culture* 14, no. 2 (2021): 37-54. Lamberigts, 37, 39.

⁵ Lamberigts, 37.

⁶ Mathias Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue, Religious Freedom, Service to the World”, *Eastern Journal of Dialogue and Culture* 14, no. 2 (2021): 37-54. These same arguments also appear in Mathias Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue, Religious Freedom, Service to The World”, a discussion paper delivered to the Doctrinal Commission of the Syro Malabar Church on July 27, 2021.

⁷ Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 37-54.

⁸ Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 37-54.

⁹ For more insights regarding Jewish initiatives to dialogue with the Christians see, N.C. Tobias, *Jewish Conscience of the Church. Jules Isaac and the Second Vatican Council*, Cham: Springer, 2017.

the formation of the document *Nostra Aetate*, detailing the Church's orientation to diverse cultures¹⁰.

Similarly, Lefebure also holds that there is a clear recognition of the transition to a new context that is very different from the past and could be observed in the documents; GS and NA¹¹. For Lefebure, two of the reasons accounting for or explaining the "troubled relationship" of the Catholic Church towards the modern world are: that Catholics before the Council did not endeavour to learn about other religious traditions and were not generally encouraged to do so on the part of the Church's higher authorities (exclusion); and that the Church became suspicious of religious others and even closed itself off during the French Revolution¹².

Hence the readings of Lamberigts and Lefebure regarding various documents of Vatican II evidence that there was an obvious shift in the theological perspective in dialogue from exclusion to inclusion. Such a shift towards and through a 'dialogue' on the part of the Catholic Church towards 'others' meant to correct the troubled relationship of the Church with others. Therefore, the Church's implication of the term dialogue can be understood in the background of an ecclesial-social framework which required an attitude of (genuine) openness to others (in dialogue), rather than exclusion. Such an attitude is expected to reflect the (then) inclusive principle at the heart of the idea of interreligious dialogue.

2. Implications and Perspectives of Dialogue in GS

According to Visioli, an important change in the self-understanding of the Catholic Church regarding 'Catholic confessionalism' is evident in the attitudes expressed in the pastoral constitution GS: 1) the affirmation of the 'separation' between state and religion 2) the recognition of the need for the mutual "coexistence" of both state and religion through autonomy and mutual independence, and 3) the emphasis on the need for a "mutual alliance for the good of citizens and believers"¹³. For Visioli, central to such a shift in Catholic self-understanding (as presented in GS no. 40)

¹⁰ Lamberigts, 37.

¹¹ Leo D. Lefebure, "Gaudium et Spes, *Nostra Aetate*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and the Opening of the Catholic Church to Other Religious Traditions", *Philosophy and Canon Law* 2 (2016): 21-37.

¹² Lefebure, "Gaudium et Spes, *Nostra Aetate*, *Dignitatis Humanae*", 23-25.

¹³ Matteo Visioli, "The Catholic Church Tested for Confessionalism: The Vatican II Doctrinal Principles", *Journal of Law and Religions* 33, no. 2 (2018): 155-171, 155-156.

is an awareness of the “mutual belongingness” with similar shared purposes between the Church and the world¹⁴. Subsequently, this pastoral constitution affirms that such a relationship of mutual responsibility has to be achieved through or towards an “attitude of dialogue and a shared future, focusing on the conscience, rights, and freedoms of the human being, without any pretension of supremacy or claim of privileges”¹⁵. In this way, one can see a vision for “dialogue and service” reflected in the understanding that the Church is on the one hand in ‘separation’ from and on the other hand in ‘reciprocity’ with the world (state or religious other)¹⁶. Hence the term ‘dialogue’ significantly represents the deep awareness and consequent readiness of the Church to relate with the ‘other’ in an attitude of ‘towards’ and ‘through’ dialogue with the world.

Lamberigts perceives that the preparatory phase of GS (regarding the role of the Church in the world) was given to the serious consideration of listening to ‘others’, stepping away from the ‘exclusivistic’ position of isolation (everything else is danger)¹⁷. As he sees it, GS was inspired by the Council’s reflections on issues like poverty, atheism and conflicts – a reflection which motivated their heightened awareness of the necessity to serve the world while also highlighting the Church’s own understanding that it does not possess all-encompassing solutions but seeks to foster dialogue among the Christian faithful¹⁸. He reminds us that while many bishops expressed a positive attitude towards this document regarding the role of the Church in the world, they did so with the caveat that this text was still not definitive but was rather an initial step towards articulating ‘dialogue’ with the world¹⁹. Similarly, Lefebure also recognises that ‘dialogue’ in GS points to a shift in the Church’s attitude towards extending respect to everyone²⁰.

¹⁴ Visioli, “The Catholic Church Tested for Confessionalism”, 158-159. (GS no. 40).

¹⁵ Visioli, “The Catholic Church Tested for Confessionalism”, 156.

¹⁶ Visioli, “The Catholic Church Tested for Confessionalism”, 159-160.

¹⁷ Lamberigts observes this attitude of openness to listen others, as is informed from the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (speech) of John XXIII. M. Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 13-14.

¹⁸ Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 16, GS (no. 91 and 92).

¹⁹ Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 5.

²⁰ Lefebure, “Gaudium et Spes, Nostra Aetate, Dignitatis Humanae,” 24-28, (GS, nos. 24 - 28).

3. Dialogue in NA

In regard to NA, Lamberigts explains that the text “invites Catholics to take seriously what is present in the other religions, even when being different” by using “open categories such as ‘true’ and ‘holy’”²¹. He further explains that the metaphor of ‘light’ (NA 2) in this document comes in reference to John 1:9 and Irenaeus, where “both [recognise] the value of what is present in other religions and the Church’s task of proclaiming and preaching Christ, for Christ is the norm for dialogue, not the Church”²². While NA considers interreligious dialogue, along with evangelisation, in the context of the Church’s service to the world, it recognises the challenges for such in relation to “secularisation, growing cultural relativism, pluralism,” and religious disaffiliation²³. Additionally, Lamberigts points out that Christian minorities in some countries might not be courageous enough or sufficiently inspired to participate in dialogue²⁴. Hence, NA invites all Christians to enter into dialogue with other religious traditions in a respectful way while simultaneously fulfilling the mission of the Church to preach the gospel, thus suggesting a close link between ‘dialogue’ and ‘preaching the gospel’²⁵.

Although its status as a pastoral document leads many to conclude that it has “little dogmatic weight”, Marianne Moyaert reads NA together with *Dei Verbum* (DV) in identifying several theological and practical implications for interreligious dialogue²⁶: 1) it positively recognised the “distinctiveness” of different religions, 2) it successfully realigned the Church’s relationship with other religions “prompting a shift from monologue to a dialogue”, 3) it accelerated the shift in attitude towards dialogue together with DV, LG and *Ad Gentes*, and 4) it formed a “first step” towards the development of more advanced theological thinking towards an “adequate theology

²¹ Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 40-43.

²² Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 40-43.

²³ Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 51-54.

²⁴ In many countries Christianity is highly recognised as a part of or emerged with colonising political powers: on the one hand it asks the Church to enter into dialogue but on the other hand the Christians in such colonised contexts are viewed with suspicion with regard to Christianity. Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 51-54.

²⁵ Lamberigts, “Vatican II, Interreligious Dialogue”, 52-54.

²⁶ Some theologians held that it is without “fully developed systematic reflections” and hence it cannot contribute towards the complexities of “multiplicity of religions”. Marianne Moyaert, “Dei Verbum, Nostra Aetate and Interfaith Dialogue”, *Louvain Studies* 39, no.1 (2016): 43-62, 60.

of religions” (even though it was itself not well developed systematically)²⁷.

Based on the analysis of authors like Lamberigts and Moyaert, the competing paradigm of pluralism was already acknowledged in some ways within NA. For her part, Moyaert identifies the seeds of what will later be discussed as pluralism and particularism (e.g., the “distinctiveness of different religions”) and the possibility of a shift beyond mere ‘inclusivism’; and Lamberigts identifies ‘pluralism’ as a challenge to be addressed by dialogue in relation to ‘preaching the gospel with respect’. In short, NA embraces the spirit of ‘inclusivism’ while prompting one to think beyond that same paradigm in terms of ‘distinctiveness’ within a context of pluralism, secularisation, relativism, and so forth.

4. GE and ‘Dialogue’

In ways similar to GS and NA, GE also evidences a shift in the attitude of the Church. For scholars like Riondino, this shift comes in contrast with the papal proclamation *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929) by Pope Pius XI. In the latter, education is emphasised as a fundamental right for all baptised individuals, whereas in GE, it is subsequently reframed as education for “any person”²⁸. With this emphasis on the ‘inclusion’ of others alongside ‘all baptised’, GE recognised ‘Catholic schools’ as appropriate venues for ‘dialogue’ between the people of God (Church) and the world. From this perspective, one can underscore that this document “gave a new impetus to the work of Catholic education” to inspire “those who wished to reappraise how to live as a Christian in a plural society”²⁹. Quoting the observations of Henri Derroitte, Lieven Boeve observes that this declaration (GE) importantly underpinned the necessity of orienting Catholic education towards a “holistic formation” and paved the way for making such education “less oppositional to the modern world”³⁰.

²⁷ Moyaert, *Dei Verbum*, “Nostra Aetate and Interfaith Dialogue”, 61.

²⁸ Michele Riondino, “Reflections on Fifty Years of Church Teaching on Universities (from *Gravissimum Educationis* to *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*)”, in *Vatican II and New Thinking about Catholic Education: The Impact and Legacy of Gravissimum Educationis*, ed., Sean Whittle (London, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 207-214, 209.

²⁹ Leonardo Franchi, “Faith, Mission and Challenge in Catholic education: The Selected Works of Gerald Grace”, *International Studies in Catholic Education* 9, no. 2 (2017): 236-249, 236.

³⁰ Lieven Boeve, *New thinking on Catholic Education Fifty Years after Vatican II*, in *Vatican II and New Thinking about Catholic Education: The Impact and Legacy of*

Furthermore, Boeve observes three existing contextual features of (European) Catholic schools at the time of the Council: 1) the prevalence of a mono-religious environment in schools without appreciation for different types of diversities, 2) the extensive involvement of priests and religious congregations in the operation of most Catholic schools, and finally, 3) the view that Catholic education was then considered primarily as a right of the Church, hence motivating the Church to defend such a right in the face of political changes stemming from decolonisation and developments due to uprise of communism in many countries³¹. In this way, the movement towards 'dialogue' in Catholic schools, even a 'limited' form of dialogue rooted in inclusivist theology, would presuppose a shift away from a school environment that (until the time of the Council) had been predominantly mono-religious.

In sum, GE's use of the term dialogue mirrors a transition from exclusion to inclusion highlighting a genuine desire for openness towards diversity. Moreover, it is also reasonable to argue that 'dialogue' in GE, when read in light of the spirit of 'inclusion' in other documents, GS (separation, mutual belonging, autonomy, etc.) and NA (distinctiveness, pluralism and relativism), attempts to achieve and extend a new understanding of respect and openness towards diversity.

II. Catholic Dialogue School CDS³²

From the reflections on the Vatican II documents by various theologians, it is clear that various theological attitudes such as exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism, and particularism/distinctiveness (with regard to the concept of dialogue) have been observed over time and are being researched, particularly in cases where schools serve as sites of genuine dialogue. During many reflections on the practice of fostering genuine dialogue within Catholic schools of Flanders, it is important to examine how the concept of the 'Catholic dialogue school' comes to fruition, taking into account various theological stances. As Catholic schools in Flanders consider encouraging meaningful discussion, it is critical to examine

Gravissimum Educationis, ed., Sean Whittle (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 55-71, 55.

³¹ Boeve, "New Thinking on Catholic Education Fifty Years after Vatican II", 56.

³² Many of the insights of this section are adapted from another article; Benny Kaippullyparamban Joy, "Towards a Paradigm of Diversity and Dialogue: Re-reading the Vision of Vatican II for Keralite Catholic Schools Today", *Eastern Journal of Dialogue and Culture* (EJDC) 17, no. 1 (2024), 85-92.

the development and implementation of the ‘Catholic dialogue school’. This new model bears some parallels to the insights developed through a re-evaluation of the notion of ‘dialogue’ in Vatican II³³. The CDS emerged as the result of lengthy years of research at KU Leuven by Pollefeyt and Bouwens³⁴ and is influenced by the theological and practical contributions of Boeve. It mainly emphasises the importance of recontextualising or reframing Catholic identity in relation to diversity and changing societies. For a brief profile of the CDS, this section draws upon Boeve’s discussion of the contextual factors, his vision of ‘dialogue’ as a descriptive element of the CDS, as well as the features of the CDS and indications of the same in the instruction, *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (2022)³⁵.

According to Boeve, secularisation, detraditionalisation, and pluralisation are three significant contextual elements that impact the execution of the CDS project in Flemish Catholic schools³⁶.

³³ Sean Whittle “Introduction”, 3-4.

³⁴ Pollefeyt and Richards, Catholic Dialogue schools, 77; *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 91, no. 1 (2020): 77-113. Katholieke Dialoogschool, “General lecture by Prof. Dr. Didier Pollefeyt” <https://www.kuleuven.be/thomas/page/dialoogschool-congres-pollefeyt/> [accessed September 25, 2023]. CDS is influenced significantly by Boeve’s study of the changing context and the mission statement for Catholic dialogue schools in that context.

³⁵ *Congregation for Catholic Education*, “Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education, ‘The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue’, 29.03.2022”, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/03/29/220329c.html> [accessed Novem 5, 2023]. Hereafter, *Congregation for Catholic Education*.

³⁶ According to Boeve, the present context is “a dynamic multi-religious society full of complexity and ambiguity,” and hence holds that post-secular Europe is characterized by a “transformation of religion”. Boeve, “Religion after Detraditionalization”, 106-107. Lieven Boeve, “Faith in Dialogue: The Christian Voice in the Catholic Dialogue School,” *International Studies in Catholic Education* 11, no.1 (2019): 39. Transformation of religion means that due to the presence of other religions and civilizations, Christianity as the primary religion loses its monopoly in the creation of people’s and society’s identities, and people and society have the option of choosing among the alternatives to Christianity. Lieven Boeve, “Religion after Detraditionalization”, 107-108. Based on his analysis of the “*European Values Study (EVS)*” reports, Boeve describes the current context of Belgium in terms of “post-secular and post-Christian”: Firstly, it is ‘post-Christian’ because the role of Catholic religion has declined to its minimum in forming the personal identity of the person and secondly, it is post-secular since the reason behind this ‘loss’ of Christianity is no more determined by secularisation but “religious pluralisation”, 57-58.

With regard to the religious identity of the people, Boeve underlines some highlights from various EVS reports, such as: 1) there are individuals belonging to

Secularisation is the process that “indicates a growing gap between the Christian tradition on the one hand and the secular sense of life on the other, a tendency that can lead to the alienation of the Christian tradition”³⁷. Detraditionalisation means “a shift in the institutional location of religion”³⁸. Pluralisation highlights the challenge for a person’s identity to conceive of oneself with regard to the “difference and otherness - especially to the effect of other truth claims to its own claim”³⁹. “Migration, tourism, and the communication media have”⁴⁰ contributed to a religiously and culturally diverse “society in which many fundamental life options occupy the field that once was largely held by the Christian tradition”⁴¹. Individualisation implies “identity is no longer inherited, but rather constructed” under the influence of or as induced by surrounding factors”⁴². In this way, detraditionalisation means that different traditions (religions) are no longer passed down seamlessly from one generation to the next⁴³. In such a context, “people’s relation to tradition changes” since traditions continue to exist “in changeable forms, in which identity is devised and found”⁴⁴. In sum, for a context of secularisation, detraditionalisation and – predominantly, pluralisation – there exists an interplay of challenging factors that result in an increase in the gap between culture and Christianity, a changed way of relating between

diverse religions, 2) there are people who do not identify with any specific “religious denomination”, and 3) there is no significant increase in the number of atheists over time, – all of which can lead to suggest that ‘secularisation’ in such as is not a simple transition from “a believing or religious stance to an unbelieving or non-religious one”. In addition to the presence of groups such as core and average Catholics, the EVS reports shed particular focus on the increasing number of non-practicing Catholics who still identify themselves as Catholics but refrain from attending church, whether for regular practices or special rituals. Such an increase in the number of third section demonstrate “a hesitant ‘farewell’ on the way towards secularisation, rather than a new form of church engagement”. Boeve, “Religion after Detraditionalization”, 58. Understanding the processes of detraditionalization, pluralisation and individualisation provides one with the characteristics of the modern context.

³⁷ Didier Pollefeyt and Jan Bouwens, “Mind the Gap! The Melbourne Scale as Mirror and Window for Catholic School Identity,” <https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/press/ecsi/files/2019/04/5.-POLLEFEYT-BOUWENS-Mind-the-gap.-The-Melbourne-Scale-as-Mirror-and-Window.pdf> [accessed December 8, 2020], 1.

³⁸ Boeve, “Religion after Detraditionalization”, 101.

³⁹ Boeve, “Religious Education in a Post-Secular and Post-Christian Context”, 146.

⁴⁰ Boeve, “Religion after Detraditionalization”, 106.

⁴¹ Boeve, “Beyond Correlation Strategies”, 235.

⁴² Boeve, “Beyond Correlation Strategies”, 235.

⁴³ Lieven Boeve, “Religious Education in a Post-Secular and Post-Christian Context”, *Journals of Beliefs and Values* 33, no. 2 (2012): 145.

⁴⁴ Boeve, “Religious Education in a Post-Secular and Post-Christian Context”, 145.

individuals and religion or religions, a confrontation between Christian truth narratives and the truth narratives of religious or cultural otherness, and an influence of the 'diversly cultured' context on an individual's identity formation⁴⁵. As Pollefeyt argues, "[t]he growing pluralisation and de-traditionalising of society have a strong impact on churches and congregations and therefore on classrooms"⁴⁶.

In response to the contextual factors above, Boeve offers three core descriptive points regarding the possibilities for Catholic school identity in such a context. As Boeve frames it, the mission for Catholic schools today requires that all the actors of (Catholic) schools accommodate everyone with whatever worldviews or ideologies they have, "provided that they want to engage in the pedagogical project of the Catholic dialogue school"⁴⁷, using the terms *Catholic*, *dialogue* and *school* as the three descriptive points which name that project. More specifically, this "dialogue with others contributes to shaping everyone's personality in a context of plurality and difference"⁴⁸, thus implying a move beyond 'Christian values education' in order to meet the new challenges of the time, not only because such an identity for Catholic schools explicitly welcomes and respects "religious and non-religious plurality," but also because it is based on the belief that

⁴⁵ Boeve, "Religion after Detraditionalization", 119-120.

⁴⁶ Henri Derroitte, Guido Meyer, Didier Pollefeyt and Bert Roebben, "Religious Education at Schools in Belgium", in *Religious Education at Schools in Europe Volume 2 Western Europe*, ed., Martin Rothgangel, Robert Jackson and Martin Jäggle (Vienna, Vienna University Press: 2014), 43-63, 51.

⁴⁷ From 2015 onwards the Catholic leadership for education in Belgium resorts to the "'Catholic dialogue school' as the normative framework for elaborating - in the years to come - the pedagogical projects of these schools and institutions". Boeve, "Faith in Dialogue: The Christian Voice in the Catholic Dialogue School," *International Studies in Catholic Education* 11, no. 1 (2019): 37-50, 37-38.

⁴⁸ School and Catholic are the other two descriptive terms in which *school* means the formation of students' identities in a holistic way with "quality education", and *Catholic* means to base such formation rooted in the virtues of "faith, hope and charity". Boeve, "Faith in Dialogue," 37-38. Catholic Education Flanders (Katholieke Onderwijs Vlaanderen), under the leadership of Director General Lieven Boeve, has sought to reformulate the Catholic identity and mission of Flemish schools towards Pollefeyt's model of the 'Catholic Dialogue School', emphasising the vital role of 'dialogue' in an atmosphere of "plurality and difference. Didier Pollefeyt and Jan Bouwens, "The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School as a 'Place of Differences Living Together in Harmony'", *Marriage, Families & Spirituality* (2022): 291-305, 292-293. Lieven Boeve, "Faith in dialogue", 37-38.

“dialogue with the other is constitutive for the construction of one’s own identity”⁴⁹.

1. Key Features of ‘Catholic Dialogue School’ CDS

Here one can speak of a synthesis of three key features in the description of the CDS. Firstly, the CDS operates from deep roots in a “Catholic anthropology and worldview” and endeavours to discuss the Catholic perspective with others through dialogue where the Catholic position can form “the other of the other”, challenging the other through the content and attitude of faith to think about their own worldviews in every encounter⁵⁰. In this way, teachers and students interact on the assumption that the Catholic position has a valuable and meaningful message to share with others in dialogue while remaining open to new learning from others, such that this dialogue also helps Catholics to understand their own faith better and to take responsibility for their own worldviews, thus deepening their own identity⁵¹. Secondly, this school model places significant emphasis on respecting plurality through dialogue by accepting that interreligious pluralism and openness to diverse religious and non-religious viewpoints may inspire new methods of constructing identities and never result in the blending of identities⁵². While dialoguing with each other, the CDS explicitly gives a preferential position to the Catholic perspective of narrating reality, preventing religious education’s method and content from falling into relativism⁵³. Finally, every encounter with the other may generate new layers of meaning irrespective of their identities, whether they are believers or nonbelievers, since a “Catholic dialogue school invites everybody to go into dialogue with each other in search of the full

⁴⁹ ‘Christian Value education’ project which emphasised traditional confessional schooling based on common values applicable to all and was also very much simultaneously linked with Christian tradition. Later when the secularisation paradigm increased the gap between culture and Christianity, “Christian horizon of meaning is no longer obvious nor generally shared”. Boeve, “Faith in Dialogue”, 41.

⁵⁰ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools,” 207. Didier Pollefeyt and Jan Bouwens, “Dialoog als Toekomst. Een Katholiek Antwoord op de Verkleuring van het Onderwijslandschap”, in *Dialoogschool in Actie! Mag Ik er Zijn Voor U?* eds., Peter Keersmaers, Marc Van Kerkhoven, and Kris Vanspeybroeck (Antwerpen: VSKO/VVKHO, 2013), 49-60. (See also unofficial English translation at <https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/press/ecsi/files/2019/04/7.-Pollefeyt-Bouwens-Dialogue-as-the-Future.pdf>).

⁵¹ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools”, 207. Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Dialoog als Toekomst”, 49-60.

⁵² Boeve, “Faith in Dialogue”, 43.

⁵³ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Dialoog als Toekomst”, 49-60.

meaning of being human” to enter into dialogue with each other where “one learns to form one’s own identity, through discovering it, thinking about it and deepening it”⁵⁴.

In sum, extending from GE, ‘dialogue’ acquires new layers of meaning today in the CDS with respect to the aspects such as: 1) enriching deep rootedness in one’s own particularity; 2) achieving more openness towards plurality while leaving respect for ‘differences’ 3) recontextualising and hence reconstructing one’s own identity. CDS stresses the importance of both uniqueness (particularity) and acknowledgement of differences (plurality)⁵⁵, in dialoguing with others in relation to a constant process of recontextualising belief. Hence, CDS while considering the shift envisioned by the Vatican documents in terms of exclusion and inclusion, also considers the aspects of plurality and particularity seriously to articulate a better theology of dialogue.

III. Parallel shifts in the Vatican’s Vision towards Dialogue

Nearly sixty years on from the developments regarding the use of ‘dialogue’ for Catholic schools initiated by GE, one can see a clear transition towards the ‘Catholic dialogue school’ in the 2022 document of the *Congregation of Catholic Education*. In their analysis of this document, Pollefeyt and Bouwens categorise the vision of this document as a *kerygmatic* form of the CDS even while the same document evidences the seeds for a *recontextualising* form of the same model with the words of Pope Francis – the form that Pollefeyt and Bouwens themselves argue in favour of. Towards this discussion, this section briefly explores 1) the rejection of a ‘narrow’ interpretation of the term ‘Catholic’, 1) the traces of ‘Catholic dialogue school’ and 2) the tension between recontextualising and kerygmatic sides of Catholic dialogue school as found in the document of the Congregation.

⁵⁴ Boeve, “Faith in Dialogue: The Christian Voice in the Catholic Dialogue School,” 38, 48. We see an example from the life of Jesus when He encountered the Syro-Phoenician lady: an encounter that “interrupted and radicalized” Jesus’ own understanding of God’s love. Lieven Boeve, “Interrupting Christian Identity Construction: Catholic Dialogue Schools and Negative Theology”, *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022): 15. Dialogue provides opportunities in Catholic schools, “first, to Christians to (re)discover their own faith, and, secondly, to the Christian faith community to re-contextualize the Christian tradition in the contemporary context”. Boeve, “Faith in Dialogue”, 48.

⁵⁵ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Dialogo als Toekomst,” 49-60.

The 2022 Vatican document addresses the ‘Catholic identity’ of educational institutions as a constitutive element of every endeavour for a “dialogical approach to a multicultural and multi-religious world”, especially in reference to the position of Pope Francis that “we cannot create a culture of dialogue if we do not have identity”⁵⁶. To that end, the document also describes three “divergent interpretations of the term ‘Catholic’” which would otherwise contradict such essential openness and dialogue: the “reductive view”, the “formal or charismatic view” and the “narrow” view⁵⁷. Among these, the *narrow* view of Catholic identity is one which would exclude non-Catholics and hence negate the ‘openness’ and ‘dialogue’ with which the Church aims to engage the world in an active way to “bear witness to a Catholic ‘culture’, that is, universal, cultivating a healthy awareness of our own Christian identity”⁵⁸. According to Pollefeyt and Bouwens, such a rejection of the ‘narrow’ sense implies the rejection of a monologue school, because such a form of Catholic school identity is too protective of the Catholic perspective and hence, attributes priority to the same over others⁵⁹.

Pollefeyt further argues that by rejecting a narrow view of ‘Catholic’, the *Congregation of Catholic Education* prefers an attitude of being “open to differences” which shows everyone the ways to live like a ‘Catholic’ – a form of the Catholic dialogue school that Pollefeyt calls ‘kerygmatic’⁶⁰. Such a ‘kerygmatic’ dialogue school prioritises the Catholic perspective with great importance and invites others to listen to it, but unlike monologue school, it doesn’t coerce it upon others – reflecting the intention of the Catholic part about its readiness to

⁵⁶ *Congregation of Catholic Education*, “Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education, ‘The identity of the Catholic school for a culture of dialogue’ 29.03.2022”, no. 2 and 17, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/03/29/220329c.html> [accessed October 02, 2023].

⁵⁷ *Congregation of Catholic Education*, “Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education, nos. 67-72.

⁵⁸ *Congregation of Catholic Education*, “Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education”, no. 72.

⁵⁹ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School”, 292-293.

⁶⁰ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School”, 293. This terminology is developed much more extensively as the Victoria Scale typology, including four primary types (Monologue, Dialogue, Colourful and Colourless Catholic schools respectively, in which the four ‘subtypes’ of the Catholic dialogue school are further classified as kerygmatic, recontextualising, formally tolerant and actively plural school). For further description of this typology see reference to four subtypes. Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Dialog als Toekomst”, 49-60.

dialogue with and listen to others and invite them to take notice of the message of 'Catholicity'⁶¹. In other words, central to this 'kerygmatic' type of dialogue encourages the Catholics to live and testify to their faith in novel ways while maintaining the conviction that they must guard against letting in too many "un-Catholic" influences⁶². It is open to anybody interested to have a dialogue about the essentials of the Christian message paying heed that the substance of Catholic beliefs in the face of a rapidly changing society is not compromised⁶³. Hence, the 2022 Vatican document, with its emphasis on the kerygmatic form of dialogue school, falls short of calling for a 'genuine dialogue' (one that requires the mutually asymmetrical relationship of partners)⁶⁴.

At the same time, while this document advocates for a kerygmatic form of the Catholic dialogue school, it also opens possibilities for a recontextualising form in reference to its citation of Pope Francis: "[t]he courage to accept differences is important because those who are different, either culturally or religiously, should not be seen or treated as enemies but rather welcomed as fellow travellers, in the genuine conviction that the good of each resides in the good of all" together with the affirmation that no one "cannot create a culture of dialogue if we do not have identity"⁶⁵. As his vision reflects, entering into a relationship with others is more than just a chance for evangelisation but also adds to the vitality of the ways one conceptualises one's own religion⁶⁶. God is manifesting God's own

⁶¹ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, "The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School", 296-298.

⁶² Pollefeyt and Bouwens, "The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School", 296-298.

⁶³ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, "Dialoog als Toekomst", 49-60.

⁶⁴ The rejection of a 'reductive form' of understanding of the term 'Catholic' is indicated by Pollefeyt and Bouwens in line with the rejection of 'Christian value education' which highlights "only one dimension of Catholic identity" (where the Catholic part is "translated" to a particular social value(s) which after a long time is prone to lose the connection with Christian tradition: mono-correlation). Pollefeyt and Bouwens considers the reason for the document's rejection of the "purely formal" perspective of the term 'Catholic', because the term 'Catholic' is too limited to an understanding of the quality of education and institution where the actors of school become more professional (missing a sense of 'community' against institution) and becomes only a "formally tolerant type," which is not as strong as the 'colourless' typology - Catholic identity is accepted as long as it doesn't get in the way of the institution's success. Pollefeyt and Bouwens, "The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School", 294-298.

⁶⁵ *Congregation for Catholic Education*, nos. 2 and 30.

⁶⁶ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, "The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School", 300.

self more fully via ‘dialogue’ with the divine Other and with ‘others’ where a Catholic oneself receives new understandings of the Christian message where Catholic faith itself is “recontextualized”⁶⁷. In such interactions, ‘dialogue’ means that the parties involved consider genuine ‘openness and receptivity’, acknowledging the importance of non-Catholic believers the same as Catholics in the classroom⁶⁸. The reality of Catholicism is not a collection of dogmas that must be imposed on others, but it is something that becomes apparent over time via consistent engagement with and interpretation of the tradition in question⁶⁹. The emphasis on the ‘hermeneutical’ connection with tradition by the *Catholic Directory for Catechesis* in 2020 points to open, questioning and seeking attitudes of the faithful⁷⁰.

In his own words, Pope Francis mentions three dimensions – “dialogue, encounter, and journey” – while stating that “interreligious dialogue does not ‘water down’ the faith”, and that “the only way to have real and fruitful dialogue is when each person remains firmly rooted to and true to his or her own identity”⁷¹. Two factors embedded in this statement are: maximum rootedness in one’s identity and maximum openness towards people of other faiths. Thus, he promotes the idea that Christians should be willing to widen their ‘interests’ and ‘dedicate’ themselves “to knowing about others” so that the other “never feels threatened,” and if one doesn’t do this, one becomes afraid of other people and becomes a threat to them⁷². The pope identifies education as an important duty and challenge of Christian vocation where Catholic schools and educators have a challenge “in restoring the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal

⁶⁷ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School”, 300-301.

⁶⁸ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School”, 300-301.

⁶⁹ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School”, 300-301.

⁷⁰ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School”, 300-301. Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation: *Directory for Catechesis*, Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020, §196.

⁷¹ Carol Glatz, “Peace requires ‘gentle power of dialogue,’ pope says at audience November 9, 2022,” *Catholic Review* <https://catholicreview.org/peace-requires-gentle-power-of-dialogue-pope-says-at-audience/> [accessed September 5, 2023].

⁷² Glatz, “Peace requires ‘gentle power of dialogue,’ pope says at audience November 9, 2022”.

humanity”⁷³. The pope says, “the identity of our schools will succeed “in making itself present and in entering into dialogue, in being a word that can, at the same time, be a challenge to people of faith and build bridges of dialogue with non-believers”⁷⁴. Hence, it seems that Pope Francis invites everyone to move beyond a ‘kerygmatic’ form of dialogue towards some other form that transcends one-sided communication. Such an exhortation is feasible in the recontextualizing attitude: in the case of dialogue with regard to Catholic schools, a “recontextualizing Catholic dialogue school” can align the features of the pope’s exhortation⁷⁵. Such a form of dialogue school can prompt one with his or her firm Catholic identity to enter genuinely into dialogue with others while remaining more open to achieving solidarity without fear and prejudices.

IV. CDS in Schools of Syro-Malabar Context: Possibilities and Reflections⁷⁶

Towards a contextual analysis of Catholic schools in Kerala, I have elsewhere analysed the significance of religion in the Indian educational system⁷⁷. My analysis of foundational documents such as national education commission reports, national curriculum frameworks (NCFs), and national education policies⁷⁸. This scrutiny reveals two high-level insights: firstly, it indicates that religious references and nuances extend beyond the confines of a given curriculum area or a particular subject, and instead permeate throughout various disciplines especially social sciences and literature. These allusions to religion in the broadest context (besides ‘Religious Instruction’ RI – for instance, catechetics in Catholics schools for Catholic students) are expressed in terms of ‘value

⁷³ Glatz, “Peace requires ‘gentle power of dialogue,’ pope says at audience November 9, 2022”.

⁷⁴ Linda Bordoni, “Pope: Catholic educators on a common project at the service of humanity (December 1, 2022)”, *Vatican News* <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-12/pope-message-oiec-catholic-education-dialogue-fraternity.html> [accessed September 5, 2023].

⁷⁵ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “The Vatican and the Catholic Dialogue School”, 300.

⁷⁶ Findings from my ongoing research *Dialogue in Diversity for a Peaceful Co-existence: Prospects of (Religious) Education for Catholic schools of Syro-Malabar in India*.

⁷⁷ Kaippullyparamban Joy, “Towards a paradigm of Dialogue and Diversity”, 85-92.

⁷⁸ Kaippullyparamban Joy, “Towards a paradigm of Dialogue and Diversity”, 85-92.

education', VE⁷⁹. This VE coexists with the opportunity of 'religious instruction' RI granted to different denominational schools (schools run by non-governmental agencies with or without financial aid of state governments) by the Indian Constitution, allowing them to teach (Catholic) religion to their respective (Catholic) student population⁸⁰. Within this broad landscape, the focus on VE, emerges as a pillar, promoting spiritual, moral, religious, universal and such other ideals. Notably, the *National Council of Educational Research and Training* (NCERT) provides recommendations for incorporating VE into the curriculum while also lobbying for its status as a separate topic or model⁸¹. With regard to 'value education' NCERT also recognises that some schools organise inter-faith communication programmes that help investigate and understand each other's faith, thereby providing opportunities to reduce or eliminate prejudices and biases⁸². Based on my analysis from the theological perspective towards the content of VE textbooks, I call it as 'religious value education'(RVE), since the content is inclusive of various (multi-) religious themes and references⁸³.

Secondly, the recurring emphasis on 'education about religions' simultaneously (in national educational documents) supported by various ideas like mutual understanding, promoting dialogue and sympathetic study of religion can be seen as noteworthy proposals in the manner in which religion is seen and taught. It is possible that 'education about religion' is primarily concerned with didactically disseminating information about certain religious practices and

⁷⁹ The term 'value education' is frequently used interchangeably with 'education for values' and 'values education', each reflecting the essence of this multifaceted concept.

⁸⁰ In order to utilise the of RI, many Catholic schools implement Catechesis (RI) for Catholic students, simultaneously separating non-Catholic population at the same time to provide with them 'value education'. This kind of value education which from a theological perspective can be called 'religious value education' RVE since many of the values are conveyed in terms of religious references. See also, Benny Kaippullyparamban Joy, "In the Midst of Diversity: The Hermeneutical-Communicative Model as a Pedagogical and Theological Paradigm in the Schools of Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Kerala, India" (PhD diss., KU Leuven, Belgium, 2022).

⁸¹ National Council of Educational Research and Training, *Education for Values in Schools: A Framework*, (2012), 24. See also, *Values Education: A Handbook for Teachers* (New Delhi, Central Board of Secondary Education: 2012). Hereafter NCERT, VE, 2012.

⁸² NCERT, VE, 2012, 38.

⁸³ Kaippullyparamban Joy, "In the Midst of Diversity", 17-35.

beliefs. But the focus on other concepts like dialogue and discussion, mutual understanding and socio-cultural harmony always pose a gap towards achieving a more participatory and inclusive strategy. Hence, prioritising *interreligious* education is a crucial component of this varied and interconnected society, even though it is also important to educate about different faiths. So, the policy makers further need to make a concerted effort to achieve the vision regarding mutual understanding, centred on interreligious dialogue together or better than with 'education about religion'. The policy makers require broader study and understanding of terms like education about religion, inter-religious education and multireligious education and their respective impact on a multi-cultural and pluralistic community.

Such a context of diversity and dialogue thus invites the questions regarding inclusion in between the tension of plurality and particularity. Both CDS of Flanders and that of the Indian educational system, as RVE and RI as far as religion is concerned, have their concerns on the question to include diverse individuals and help fostering positive relations among the individuals of schools or communities or nations. Consider the intention of '(religious) value education' (as curriculum as a whole and as a single subject) in the Indian educational system with the inclusion of religious values, together with the provision for a clear distinction for RI. Both these components envision to consider the attitude of inclusion and respect towards plurality and diversity the latter with more nuanced towards 'education about religions' and former (RI) as focussed on particularity of a religion to a particular group (catechesis for Catholics). Hence, the CDS perspective to positively consider a 'pluralistic context' is similar in the attitude envisioned in the Indian educational system especially when dealing with religion. Consequently, it can be said that CDS is a uniquely *Catholic* approach towards positively and genuinely addressing the question of plurality in relation to Catholic particularity, whereas RI and RVE as a whole are the Indian national perspective to approach the question of diversity and plurality with equalizing respect and appreciation for all. However, national views RI and RVE, which place more emphasis on 'education *about* religions', are based on perception that various (religious) values incorporates and respect pluralism whereas CDS has its foundation in interreligious dialogue and interactions among people each with a unique identity. With such a perception, the Indian

national vision aims to achieve national unity and integrity among different religions.

In summary, despite the differences in their specifics, there is a shared commitment to fostering inclusive educational environments that promote peaceful coexistence and mutual enrichment between the proposals in the Indian educational system and CDS. As a profoundly pluralistic and culturally diverse society with religion as a significant identity marker, Indian educational leadership must evaluate the following question: Have RI and (R)VE initiatives accomplished the aims for which they were designed like national unity, integrity and peaceful coexistence? It is critical that we study and assess their effectiveness, particularly in terms of promoting and extending interreligious endeavours in the context of Indian education.

Conclusion

Considering Vatican II's vision towards education and GE as its starting point not only encourages theologians to articulate perspectives on dialogue towards others within Catholic schools but also necessitates a meticulous examination and understanding of the emergence of the concept of a 'Catholic dialogue school'. Towards this aim, this study explores significant implications of the word 'dialogue' in the broader context of the ways this term is used in other documents especially GS and NA. For this purpose, the insights of various theologians regarding the ways and nuances with which it occurs in the other Vatican II documents, as analysed by this study, perceive that there is an explicit shift from the exclusivist attitude of the Church towards inclusivism. Furthermore, these enthusiastic insights initiated and prompted many theologians to reflect on other paradigms significant in the application of dialogue such that an innovative model of CDS is born in Flanders.

The CDS model with its genuine openness towards plurality, commitment towards particularity, and enthusiasm towards listening and welcoming others towards solidarity, effectively elucidates the implications of the term dialogue. These characteristics of the approach to religious plurality and diversity, implemented through CDS, are consistent with the developments advocated by the Church's vision in several texts from Vatican II and the latest one of 2022. These allusions developed upon the idea of 'dialogue' firmly rooted in the emphasis in GE, not only transcends inclusivism but also seeks to strike a balance between particularism and pluralism. Moreover, there

is an appreciable resonance between KU Leuven Catholic dialogue school and the work of the Congregation for Catholic Education, even with its tensions between a kerygmatic form of that model and a recontextualising form. Such a model is also a source of inspiration for the interreligious initiatives geared to Catholic education and in the Syro-Malabar context of India, observing and understanding the opportunities that exist in the curriculum and the educational policies.

Since Vatican II and continuing thereafter, the framework for Catholic education enhanced significant openness to religious groups, highlighting new levels of reflection on 'dialogue'. Pope Francis's vision of an 'encounter' which necessarily acknowledges diversity is still relevant and important today and, in the future, where he exhorts:

The richness of life is in diversity. For this reason, the point of departure cannot be, 'I'm going to dialogue but he's wrong.' No, no, we must not presume that the other person is wrong. I dialogue with my identity but I'm going to listen to what the other person has to say, how I can be enriched by the other, who makes me realize my mistakes and see the contribution I can offer. It is a going out and a coming back, always with an open heart. If I presume that the other person is wrong, it's better to go home and not dialogue, would you not agree? Dialogue is for the common good and the common good is sought by starting from our differences, constantly leaving room for new alternatives. [...] Dialogue is about seeking the common good. Discuss, think, and discover together a better solution for everybody⁸⁴.

The above-mentioned vision of Pope Francis is reflected further in the most recent document from the *Dicastery for Culture and Education* (2022), which emphasises the importance of dialogue with regard to the idea, "attention to one's own identity with the understanding of others and respect for diversity" (no. 30)⁸⁵. The document says:

The courage to accept differences, because those who are different, either culturally or religiously, should not be seen or treated as enemies, but rather welcomed as fellow-travellers, in the genuine conviction that the good of each resides in the good of all⁸⁶.

⁸⁴ Pope Francis, "Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay (July 11, 2015)", no. 2, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150711_Paraguay-societa-civile.html [accessed October 23, 2023].

⁸⁵ *Congregation for Catholic Education*, no.30 [accessed November 5, 2023].

⁸⁶ *Congregation for Catholic Education*, no.30 [accessed November 5, 2023].