

Creating a new Benedictine School - José Manuel Eguiguren Guzmán

Talk to the International Benedictine Conference about the Manquehue Apostolic Movement's experience in education. Worth Abbey, October, 1999

1. INTRODUCTION

Good morning. I have been asked to share with you something of the Manquehue Movement's experience in education. I think that I shall have to begin by explaining a little more about our Movement and its origins. Then I shall go on to offer some thoughts on Christian and specifically benedictine education. I shall also include a little about what we are up to in our schools in Chile as it may be of interest. One further thing: I ask you to forgive me for my ignorance of inclusive language.

2. THE MOVEMENT'S ORIGINS AND ITS EDUCATIONAL WORK

The fact that I am in education at all has to do with an experience I had when I was a university student in Santiago in the 70's. I was twenty-five and undergoing what might best be called an existential crisis. At a time when nothing seemed to make sense to me, a benedictine monk handed me the Sacred Scriptures and taught me to read them in such a way that it seemed as though Jesus Christ himself was revealing himself to me, risen and alive, shedding light on my life and filling it with meaning. Although I clearly remember that day when I first turned up at the monastery, this new awareness was a gradual thing. I would head up to the monastery almost every day where Fr Gabriel, with endless patience, would make time for me, address my questions, share my anxieties and help me listen to the answers that God provided me with in His Word. All this went on for three years and the extraordinary thing was precisely this, that it was not what Fr Gabriel said that mattered most, but rather whom he taught me to listen to. Little by little I began to realise that it was Jesus Christ I was coming up against and I gradually came to see that God was not an impersonal force but a person who loved and cared for me.

At the end of this period, without really knowing quite how, I ended up being put in charge of a top year Confirmation group in my old school. All I did with them was do what Fr Gabriel had done with

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me: take the Bible and set about discovering how the Word of God speaks to each one of us individually. Their response was remarkable. We soon became filled with ideals. We wanted to do things, change the world. We became friends, very good friends. We decided to organise ourselves and we called ourselves the Manquehue Apostolic Movement after the school we all belonged to, Manquehue School. Manquehue is the name of a nearby mountain and means "place of condors" in the native Indian language.

One of our more important activities was our work with young children. We felt that we simply had to be with them and tell them about our experience of Jesus Christ. A very special relationship began to grow up between a number of the older students and the younger ones. They helped train the younger sports teams, helped them with their studies or simply played with them in their free time. We began to discover how this special relationship, which we began to call *tutoría*, was in fact a precious vehicle for talking to the children about this living God that had so much to do with their lives and all that was happening to them, who spoke to them through his Word and who heard their prayers.

It is worth pointing out that *tutoría*, this special relationship between older and younger students, is very much alive in our schools today. In fact, and it will become clear later on in my talk, our three schools would cease to exist if they did not have *tutoría*. Indeed, one might say that *tutoría* is the soul of each school. Without the tutors our whole educational project would fall apart. As a result, given that the majority of our tutors are pupils, the students themselves must be seen as a fundamental part of our educational project.

Coming back to those early days: in the end we had to leave Manquehue School for various reasons and we began working in a parish after a brief spell of having a base in a small rented house. If I had to explain the purpose behind our community in those first years I would say this: being friends, being attentive to the Word and looking to respond to His call. And when we founded San Benito College in 1982 this new project enabled us to develop this friendship, this listening and this response.

3. THE MANQUEHUE APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT

Since then, the Manquehue Apostolic Movement has grown in numbers and in its scope of activities. However, its members have one essential experience in common: someone, in a spirit of loving welcome, has taught them to use the Bible in such a way as to encounter Jesus Christ in it personally. This encounter leads them to be baptised or to become more aware of what their being baptised as children meant and still means. They have become Christians, that is, they belong to Christ. They realise, however, that the fruits of their baptism are not immediately apparent, that their

baptism is like a germ or seed in the ground destined to unfold in the course of their lives, like an aptitude waiting to be developed. The task ahead of them is to do all they can to cultivate this seed to its full maturity.

Over the course of the years the Holy Spirit has steered the Manquehue Movement towards the Rule of St Benedict as a way of helping its members in this task. In the Rule its members have discovered a very practical means of organising themselves in order to live out their baptism. They have found that what St Benedict wrote more than fifteen centuries ago is entirely appropriate for their lives today. The Movement constitutes, therefore, an Extended Benedictine Community, that is to say, a community of men and women who live, work and pray together under a Rule and a superior. We use the word "extended" because, although it does have certain places of its own, unlike a monastery, the Movement has no fixed territorial boundaries and encompasses the many different places where its members live, work and pray.

Today the Movement has approximately nine hundred members: men and women, rich, not-so-rich and poor, married and single, young and old. More than a third are below the age of twenty-five. Some feel more part of the Movement than others, but at its heart lie "the oblates" who go to make up a small inner community towards which the rest of the members converge in varying degrees of commitment. These "oblates" are lay people who have made a stable commitment within the Movement. They currently number twenty-two: thirteen married people and nine celibates, seven women and fifteen men.

The Movements main work, other than the celebration of the Divine Office in choir, is in education. San Benito College began in 1982 as I have already mentioned, and it has one thousand five hundred pupils. San Lorenzo College was set up in 1986 and currently is attended by six hundred pupils in a poor area in Santiago. San Anselmo College was founded in 1995 and at present has five hundred pupils, the expected future total being one thousand eight hundred once the project is complete. The three are all mixed day schools. Boarding schools are very rare in Chile. The boys and girls start at four and leave when they are eighteen years old.

4. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

One of the most remarkable things about the Rule of St Benedict is its adaptability. We know that this largely has to do with the Rule's human touch, it's ability to comprehend the essence of what it is to be human, combined with that level headedness and indomitable spirit which pervade it from start to end. When we try to define Christian education we should look to the very adaptability of the Rule as a yardstick designed to prevent us from getting confused by these changing times. Christian

education, like the Rule, must adapt without losing its essential message and purpose. Many things change but man remains the same. His fundamental questions remain the same and the answers available to him in the Gospel continue to be the only ones that can provide him with real life, fulfilment and meaning. Whatever the time and place, Christian education must always be a matter of evangelisation.

To educate is to draw people towards a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It is to teach them how to listen to this God who speaks, and to accompany them so that they can respond to the Word that God is addressing them.

I am often asked what sort of school leavers we are looking to produce. My only reply is to say that what we want are men and women who are able to listen to and respond to God's vocation for them. Our vocation is the Word with which God addresses each one of us. It comes from God, not from us or from other people. As a result, to educate is not only a matter of teaching a person to be attentive, to listen, but also of accompanying that person in their response to the Word. Such companionship must be a question of helping, correcting and encouraging a person rather than directing them with ready-made ideas and advice.

Looked at from this perspective the motive and end in Christian education must be love. Indeed, I would like to take up one of Cardinal Hume's thoughts. He says in his book "In Praise of Benedict" that "at the heart of the Gospel, the Good News given to you and me, is the twofold commandment to love God and to love our neighbour. We do not automatically love God and our neighbour in the way that Our Lord means us to love them. This love has to be learnt and practised. It takes time and effort. The monastery is a school for learning such love. Our schools, like monasteries, are places where we learn and practise love. " We shouldn't lose sight of love when we are talking about Christian education.

5. EDUCATION IN THE MANQUEHUE APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT

Being benedictine is no more and no less than one form of being a Christian. Indeed, in the Manquehue Movement we have come to understand how the Rule of St Benedict is one particular way of living out a baptism we share with all of God's People.

Likewise, benedictine education is just one particular way of educating people in the Gospel. What makes it different from other ways is the inspiration it draws from the Rule of St Benedict. There are essentially two ways of letting this inspiration flow through our school life. One way is to go directly to the text of the Rule and ask ourselves what advice we think St Benedict would give us about a certain situation we face in school if he were with us today. The second is more indirect whereby we

simply let a benedictine way of seeing and doing things pervade through the life and example of those in the school who live the Rule day in day out. In my view, both ways of "benedictinising" school life are indispensable and, indeed, complementary but I believe that in this day and age there are strong arguments for making the influence and presence of the Rule in our schools much more explicit. This requires a deep conviction that St Benedict really has something important to say to us about education.

A few years ago we brought out a pocket sized edition of the Rule which has been put to good use in our schools.

By combining this sort of contact with the Rule, with the example to be found in so many monasteries, and with fervent prayer to St Benedict himself we have been able to discover how the Rule has an enormous amount to tell us. Indeed, we have come to see how every single part of the Rule can be applied to lay life and hence to our work in education. Use of the Rule in our schools is not just confined to members of the Manquehue Movement. We ensure that every teacher learns about the Rule and how to use it in special in-house training days. Our students learn how to use the Rule in religion classes and homework. Furthermore, we make sure that our parents become familiar with the Rule and draw nourishment from its wisdom through weekend workshops.

I now want to go into some of our key projects in greater depth. I hope you will forgive me for the detail, but I think the best way of sharing our experience with you is to talk less about theory and more about practice.

6. LISTENING TO THE WORD AND TUTORÍA

The ability "to listen" is the prime aptitude we wish to see in our children. By "listening" I mean man's attentive openness to God: a God who speaks through Jesus Christ, Word Incarnate, who in turn makes Himself available to us through the prayerful reading of Holy Scriptures or in what we call *lectio divina*. As with all aptitudes, this ability to listen is something that has to be taught and done so bearing in mind St Benedict's advice that different temperaments and ages require different handling (cf RB 2,31). We endeavour to ensure that the Word of God is ever present in our schools. All the children, for example, begin the school day listening to a reading from the Gospels, which is then followed by a moment of silence for prayer and reflection. One period a week is taken up with *tutoría* which I will explain in a minute. We also ensure that there are different opportunities for the rest of the school community to listen to God's Word: every department meeting, every interview with parents, each headmaster's meeting, almost any activity within school starts with a Gospel reading

and a moment for silent prayer or, if they so wish, for someone to share what they believe the Word is saying to them personally.

Simply reading the Word, however, is not good enough in itself. What is needed is for the Word to be brought home to each person. We must remember what the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts said to Philip: "How can I understand (the Scriptures) if I have no one to guide me?" (Acts 8,31). This is where the tutors come in. In our schools the tutors must play Philip to the children. A tutor might be a senior student, an old boy or old girl or a younger member of the Manquehue Movement who is assigned to a specific group of children with whom he or she over the course of time builds up a strong, personal relationship, concerning him or herself with the children's wellbeing, how they are getting on in school and at home, and through love ensuring that no child feels lost among the crowd. Every tutor has, in general, been on the receiving end of tutoría and when he or she volunteers to be a tutor it is now their job to care for the children and reveal a living God to the younger ones, a God who speaks to them through the Scriptures and who is at work in their everyday life. A tutor can come to have an enormous influence in the life and faith of a younger boy or girl. Few adults are as credible in the eyes of, say, an eight to ten year old in the way an older student of sixteen or seventeen is. Tutors not only work with the children during the weekly tutoría period. There are plenty of other opportunities for developing this special relationship, like scouts, helping out with the training of the younger sports teams, getting involved in junior plays or going on outings with the children. In this way tutoría permeates the atmosphere of a school.

The weekly tutoría periods end when the children reach the age of fifteen (cf RB 70,4). At this point the students can opt to join a Shared Lectio Group run by the Manquehue Movement. These groups of between six and twelve people meet once a week, out of school hours, and currently just over half of the fifteen to eighteen year olds in our schools belong to a Lectio Group. (It is important to mention that these Lectio Groups are not just something for the students. There are Lectio Groups made up of parents, teachers and maintenance staff as well.) In their weekly meetings the students proclaim the Word and share with each other or pray out loud what God is saying to them. Each group is headed by a slightly older member of the Manquehue Movement.

One vital aspect of tutoría is the retreat programme w hereby we send every form, between the ages of ten and eighteen, to a retreat house in the country for a whole weekend once a year.

Another important part of this process are the different service projects we run with our students. St Benedict invites us to recognise Christ Himself in the guests who arrive at a monastery, in the poor, the old, the disabled, and indeed in all those who are in need. By bringing students into contact with

this Christ present in the needy we are able to create a further space for listening to the Lord. However, for the service projects to become an authentic and explicit contact with Christ we have come to realise the importance of incorporating lectio divina and the Divine Office into such activities and for the service activities to be done with others, in community.

7. PRAYER AND THE DIVINE OFFICE

Prayer plays a significant part in all that I have been talking about. The lectio divina taught in tutoría reveals a God who not only speaks, but who also responds. The children first come to know about this thanks to the testimony of their tutors and in time discover this for themselves through their own experience. Knowing that God responds to our prayers, knowing that God is available, is without doubt one of the main incentives for prayer.

St Benedict does, however, give pride of place to community prayer, the Divine Office. Let me tell you briefly about some of the ways we have tried to incorporate this aspect of the benedictine way into our school life.

Firstly, we have made sure that each school has a regular choir open to everyone. Lauds, Midday Office and Vespers are celebrated there Monday to Friday and the children know that they can join in whenever they want.

Secondly, we have been trying to develop a programme whereby our pupils can really understand what it means to be called to take part in the Liturgy of Hours and there deepen our belonging to the Church. One example of this programme is how at ten, all our students start learning simple psalm tones in their music lessons. Another is how at their First Holy Communion we give them a book of Compline, an easy to use four week version we brought out a few years ago. Indeed, we have found that Compline is the most common way into the Divine Office, especially when families manage to begin praying it together.

8. COMMUNITY, ACOGIDA, AND FRIENDSHIP

Community is a further key feature of our school life. We like to see each school, each form, each department as a community and as such an image of the Church.

We need community. We are all weak. We cannot make it alone. We need to belong to "the ranks of brothers" (RB 1,5) who can correct us, teach us and be available for us. We need the support of others. This is as true for our students as it is for us.

Moreover, our schools must be communities built up in love.

But this love cannot be theoretical love. It must be real and personal. I am convinced that our parents commend their sons and daughters to us because they love them. Our schools must be a place where we can prolong that family love. In carrying out this task tutoría is irreplaceable. It is the guarantee of that personalised love. In this light I have no doubt that tutoría constitutes the soul of each school.

One way of fostering this personalised love is by means of what we call in Spanish, la acogida. It is a very difficult term to translate into English. The dictionary will offer you various translations such as welcome, reception, acceptance, refuge, admittance - giving you the impression that the word has something to do with being hospitable. Indeed St Benedict saw Christ in his guests and when, in our schools, we insist on acogida we are calling for an attitude that recognises and adores Christ himself in another person, whoever they be, of opening one's heart to the love of that other person, of making space in one's thinking, and of listening to another among all the preoccupations and tasks that absorb the mind. It is a lot to expect everyone to show this sort of attitude to each other, but encouraging and living out this acogida is an essential task of tutoría. We insist, above all, that the more experienced tutors practise acogida with students, especially the older ones. They must be prepared to "waste" time with and be available to any student who approaches them.

School spirit and loyalty are further important aspects of building a school community. Again the tutors are key here. They know that they are indispensable. They know that the school is what they are. They know that we cannot build up a loving school community without them and this in turn means that they invariably identify with most other areas of school life. We have found that this awareness of their role elicits a pride, loyalty and love of the school that is invaluable in this building process.

a) Another aspect of our community life in school is the way we attempt to encourage friendship among our students. One small book in particular has been a great help to us in this area, namely Aelred of Rievaulx's "On Spiritual Friendship". I mentioned earlier how in the first few years of the Movement we began listening to the Word and how in our desire to respond to that Word we became close friends. "On Spiritual Friendship" confirmed us in our conviction that our friendships were no accident, that they were an essential part of our path. It also taught us to develop our friendships in Christ and in the direction of Christ. And this is the sort of friendship we teach our students today in

retreats, in tutoría and in spiritual companionship. Above all we try to live out this ideal of friendship among ourselves.

9. ORDER, DISCIPLINE AND FREEDOM

Our schools are made up of weak people like any other community. We need help. We must learn. St Benedict's concept of "a school of the Lord's service" (RB Prol 55) has been of great inspiration to us on this point. It has helped us to see how our schools should not be places for those who know but for those who want to learn, not for those who can, but for those who need help. For "it is not the healthy who need a doctor rather those who are sick" (Mk 2,17).

However, within this "school of the Lord's service" order and discipline are essential. A brief glimpse at the Rule is enough to tell us this. It is full of detailed instructions on how to run a monastery: times, places, responsibilities, punishments. However, St Benedict leaves us perfectly clear that order and discipline are means not ends in themselves. He warns us at the end of the Prologue of the need for a "little strictness", but he also explains that this leads to "our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love". Chapter seven takes us through a journey of asceticism and negation that at the end of the day brings us to "that perfect love of God which casts out all fear". Finally, the Rule culminates with that wonderful description of the fullness of fraternal love and eternal life we find in chapter seventy-two.

This concept of a school for the weak and sick and the rightful place and purpose of order and discipline within it have been fundamental in helping us decide on what sort of rules and disciplinary measures we should have in our schools in Chile. I do not intend to explain all these things here, but it may be of interest to you if I were to share some of the more important criteria we believe St Benedict has taught us.

School rules exist not to limit or restrict our students, but to help them to a greater freedom. They should aim not only to "amend faults" but to "safeguard love" (RB Prol 47). We cannot let rules become a matter of a line not to be crossed, but rather a framework that helps us correct what is bad and encourage what is good, as the Rule says "coaxing, reproving and encouraging ... as appropriate" (RB 2,31). Indeed, we have come to see correction and acogida as two different manifestations of a single charity. Love without correction is nothing but a vice. Correction without love only ends in rebelliousness.

The aim and purpose of punishment must be to produce an inner change. Disciplinary measures are not there to administer justice, but to heal the person who has committed a fault. This means that those responsible for discipline must be aware that they "have undertaken the care of the sick" (RB

27,6). They should develop their "skill for winning souls" (RB 58,6), a task that demands creativity and tact as "every age and level of understanding should receive appropriate treatment" (RB 30,1). This does not mean that we should simply be less demanding of some, rather we should look to treat each student with a view to what we can expect of him or her and what is the best form of achieving this "so that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from" (RB 64,19). With younger children it is important to "cut vices out while we can, as soon as they begin to sprout" (RB 2,26) because when children get older it is more difficult and indeed, in this way they learn "good habit and the delight of virtue" (RB 7,68).

St Benedict has plenty of other things to say about order and discipline in our schools. The Rule, as you know, has much to say to us about private and public correction, the need for increasing the severity with which repeated offenders are punished, prayer as a powerful means of helping difficult children, the possibility of having to punish in order to set an example for others and, finally, the need to be prepared to expel people for the good of the community (cf RB 70,3 and RB 28,6). However, as I say, I have just wanted to share what we have found to be the most useful.

10. WHOLENESS

One of the most compelling characteristics of the Rule is its vision of wholeness. St Benedict sees every moment of the day, every place, every activity, every person as part of a whole, pointing towards a single goal: God. The traditional benedictine motto *Ora et Labora* poignantly expresses this vision: prayer and work, twofold aspects of a single path. God is to be found everywhere by the person who searches for him. That pagan splitting of the world into the material and spiritual is entirely alien to the Rule. Nor is there any hint in the Rule of that division of the Christian life into the active and the contemplative. Indeed, we have discovered how the Rule seems to offer a convincing way of living out the Vatican Council's call for a stronger union between faith and everyday life.

This means that in our schools we try to ensure that all aspects of school life contribute to putting everyone in touch with God and His call. We want our science teachers, history teachers, maths teachers, indeed all our staff, to feel that they are taking part in one single mission. It is important at this point to mention that the majority of our staff are not members of the Manquehue Movement. This means that staff must not only be technically good at their job, but they must also be open to our schools' mission and look for ways to get involved. This also implies being open to God. For when we talk of wanting to evangelise in our schools, we are not just talking about bringing the Good News to our students, but to all those who in one way or another work or come into contact with us.

Academic studies are of course central and we have put a lot of work into building a strong reputation in this area. However, studies are just one, albeit important, aspect of a pastoral plan designed to encompass all areas of our school life. We see a rigorous academic programme as a further way of encouraging our students to listen to God and reply to Him. Serious and disciplined academic work is part of that search for the Truth, for God who reveals Himself in His creation. Moreover, we need to provide our boys and girls with the skills they need to live out their vocation in today's world. Not to do so would be not to love them. Acquiring these skills requires plenty of study. There is also a very practical point here: without a healthy academic side we would not have any pupils. Parents look for academic excellence and we have to provide it.

However, it is important to view studies and academic success in the wider context of our "school of the Lord's service". While the Lord has placed many gifts in our students we try to ensure that developing these talents does not become an end in itself. Chapter fifty-seven on the "Craftsmen of the Monastery" has helped us see how the parable of the talents (cf Mt 25,14-30) is misinterpreted if it is taken to mean that we should develop our skills without any reference to something greater. Moreover, we try to teach our students that our limitations and failures are often gaps through which God's grace can enter our lives. The first and foremost talent is humility.

11. WORK CAMPS, MISSIONS AND SCOUTS

Before coming to my final and concluding point, I would like to tell you about one aspect of our work with the young that I am very pleased with, namely the different community activities that take place during their summer and winter holidays. These activities last between seven to ten days and have come to play a key role in our school programme. Younger students take part in scout camps, going away with senior students, tutors or old-boy scout leaders. The older boys and girls choose between work camps and missions. These activities are organised by the students themselves. The work camps involve carrying out some form of community service in places like old people's homes or poorly funded rural schools and chapels. The students work in simple building and repair projects or help out with painting or cleaning jobs. The missions involve going away to a rural area where the students have to spend long hours going from house to house in pairs, inviting people to a moment of prayer and reflection on the Word of God. They also organise evening meetings in the local chapels (or in other suitable meeting places) setting up prayer groups and teaching them about shared *lectio divina*.

In July over one hundred and seventy of our students took part in the latest work camps and missions and seventy five younger children took part in scout camps.

(OHP sheet inserted here)

The boys and girls find the rhythm hard, especially when it is their first camp or mission. However, by the end of the week they are invariably talking about a sense of fun and fulfilment that is difficult to find in their normal lives. And what is really remarkable is that over a period of a week or more our students voluntarily live out so much of what I have been talking about in my talk up till now. They have the opportunity to work with the Rule and value many of its aspects. For instance they see sense in defining a "cloister" to keep the community together over the time that they are in mission or on camp. This cloister is a cloister without walls and is different for different people: a key concept in the life of our Extended Benedictine Community. The students work in community, celebrate the Divine Office and practise *lectio divina*: *Ora et Labora*. Tutoría and spiritual companionship flow naturally. The strength of the friendships that spring up is extraordinary. Indeed, there is no better recipe for building and creating friendships than working hard together to repair a roof, or walking for hours with someone else just to get to a remote house in order to share a kind word and the Word of God. They discover that, with both friendship and a sense that is beyond themselves - like helping someone in need -, they can happily put up with the cold showers, weariness, poor food, extreme temperatures, hard floors and general discomfort. The boys and girls learn many other things too, like the fundamental need for putting someone in charge, as experience quickly shows them that without authority community life falls apart and nothing gets done.

If we take a closer look at this timetable which was put together by the students themselves, we can see just how similar it is to a monastic timetable. Perhaps they are not aware of it, but what happens to them over the period of a week or so, is what life can be like when lived under the Rule of St Benedict. I don't want to seem naive. I know that a week's experience is very different from a whole life lived day in day out in a benedictine community. I know about the difficulties of living a life according to the Rule: the routine, frustrations, boredom, dry moments. However, I also know about the life that comes from the Gospel and that the Lord pours forth his Spirit and enlightens and gives meaning to the most unimaginable situations and most unbearable circumstances.

I would like to make a comment apart here. It is remarkable to see how the involvement and initiative of our older students in activities like tutoría, missions and scouts means that they learn to speak openly about Jesus Christ. We have seen how this produces something wonderful in our boys and girls: a deeper and more mature faith, a faith that is opted for, a faith of assent, a faith, I believe, that is more likely to survive and shine in today's society than a faith that simply comes to us via tradition and culture.

12. MONASTERIES, SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY

Benedictines have been involved in education right from the very beginning. Both the Rule of St Benedict and the Dialogues of St Gregory mention children living alongside monks. St Benedict himself wrote about a monastery being a "school of the Lord's service", a place of learning how to serve and love God. The children in those early monasteries were clearly included in this learning process. Today we want the children in our schools to belong to a similar school of love.

St John Chrysostom once said that if the cities were Christian then there would be no need for monasteries. Indeed, St Benedict presents us in his Rule with an unfolding Christian society in miniature like that of the first Christians. It is wonderful to think that today, on the threshold of the third millennium and despite all our weaknesses, the Lord is offering us in the Rule of St Benedict, a possibility to live out our faith, in the same way as those first Christians did.

The implications of these thoughts for our schools are far reaching. For if our schools are simply places designed to prepare young people for surviving the rat-race, acquiring fortunes,

reaching positions of power and respect, then we are wasting our time thinking that our communities are best suited for education. In this case our schools simply become obstacles to living out St Benedict's ideal: alien bodies within the monastery.

On the other hand, if we see our schools as places of evangelisation, for teaching our pupils to listen to this God who speaks, for bringing them to place the risen Lord at the centre of their lives, then it is difficult to think of a more suitable entity for educating young people than a benedictine community. For a community that follows the Rule is exactly that: an alternative society where Jesus Christ is the focal point of all activity. And when we recall Pope John Paul's words at Subiaco in 1980, where he referred to the vision of community described in chapter seventy-two as "the ideal to which society as a whole should aspire", we should hope that our pupils can leave our schools taking this ideal to the world and there act as yeast in the dough, leaven in society.

Our pupils in Chile spend a total of fourteen years in our schools. During this time we want them to live a life in community that will give them an experience, like that of a monastery, which is in itself an alternative society. We do not expect all of our students to become members of the Manquehue Movement, just as none of you expect all your pupils to become monks. We do however, believe that this experience gives them a clear Christian and ecclesial identity. This experience doesn't set them apart from the society in which they live. On the contrary, it allows them to relate to society with respect, without losing that identity which, in turn, they can contribute with love.

I thank God that He has granted us all such a work as education. Not only does education allow us to live by the labour of our own hands "as our fathers and the apostles did" (RB 48,8) but it also gives

us the opportunity of helping to build a society more in tune with the Gospel. And if this were not enough I also believe that the demands that education makes upon us encourages us to deepen our own call to follow the path of St Benedict, concentrating on the essential and focusing on the absolute.

It may be of interest if I go through a typical work camp timetable. The missions follow a slightly different programme, but the essential experience and rhythm of community life is the same.

07:30 Office of Readings (voluntary)

08:00 Lauds

08:30 Breakfast

09:00 Work

13:00 Midday Office

13:30 Lunch Rest

15:30 Work

17:30 Lectio in pairs

18:30 Vespers

19:00 Talk or group work

20:00 Supper

21:00 Recreation

23:00 Compline