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STRATEGIES OF RELIGIOUS FORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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– ABSTRACT –

In the context of the value crisis within the secularized society, the Church, alongside Family and School, has the duty to carry out the mission of confessing the right faith as a landmark for life here, but also for the eternal life. The spiritual formation of every Christian has its origins in childhood, the parents being a child's very first educators, and role models. Then Church comes along and is added to this work, having in itself a formative and educational dimension. Its universe is laden with biblical teachings, and the prayers uttered and chanted, the entire symbolism comprised within the priestly garments, the icons of saints, and the church architecture itself offer children an ideal opportunity to get acquainted to God and holiness.

The educational process is complemented by school, which represents an important and decisive factor in the formation of children and youngsters, especially regarding their integration into society, but also their progress on the path to the Kingdom of God. Religious education offered in the educational environment is part of the work of the Church, aiming at confessing the Christian faith, and pastoring those who have embraced it as a fulfillment of Saint Peter the Apostle's call: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18).

The care the Church offers youngsters is one of its priorities, because young people represent the future, which will be defined by the life conduit they will have. The knowledge of the truths of faith, the appropriation of moral-religious values, and their transposition into behaviour can offer a chance for building a world where the love for God and for others would prevail.

Teaching Religion in school is a missionary act that can decisively contribute to the formation of the Christian ideal by passing on the evangelical message, and this is also the fundamental requirement of the Church within the work of man's redemption.

The responsibility of the Church and its position in regard to the education of children and youngsters is a constant aspect that has remained primordial within the educational and missionary pursuits of the Church, being a valuable investment in the future, because the fundamental truths of life must be appropriated and consolidated from infancy, so that they would grow ever stronger in time. The relationship between Church and School is built by the Religion teacher, who acts as a guide to the realm of the Church. And it is in the sacramental

space of the Church where the work of bringing children and youngsters to know God is perfected, not only at a cognitive level, but also in a practical manner, through Holy Communion, so that they may obtain eternal life, which is the ideal of religious education par excellence, as it is written in the Holy Scripture: “Now this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” (John 17:3).