

# CODE OF ETHICS

FOR THE MEMBERS  
OF THE ASSOCIATION  
OF SLOVENIAN  
CATHOLIC TEACHERS



*Ethics is the only value, the only way to teach. What the teacher must transmit is values. They are the essence. And there is only one kind of pedagogy, it's the pedagogy of the example. No other pedagogy exists. Sometimes we say one thing in the classroom, but outside children see just the opposite. Thus, the example is of the greatest importance.*

Federico Mayor, Ph. D.

General Director of UNESCO, Iskanja, No 21

*Your code of ethics is so rich in content that it would indeed be well worth considering from every angle how it can be used and put into effect in the everyday life and work of a school. Put briefly, the philosophical and moral dialogue within the Slovene education system has not yet brought much benefit: the Catholic teachers' code of ethics now represents a good opportunity to enrich it – humanistically, democratically and with spiritual awareness.*

Vlado Sruck, Ph. D.

*Today we are familiar with a whole range of professional ethics and the codes of ethics which derive from them. It would be strange then if education, which involves all children and many adults too, lacked such a code. With life and work becoming ever more complicated it is clear that in addition to professional and legal norms we need to formulate specific rules for concrete work and decision-making which are morally binding for teaching staff and which make their work easier. For this reason I welcome efforts to put together such a code.*

Milan Divjak, Ph. D

*The school of the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs teachers who take delight in life, who like meeting people, who are not afraid of showing their feelings, who are warm, critical, inquisitive, generous, professionally competent and honest people. We need people who are concerned about the fate of humankind and who build the common house of the world. We need people who love young people; teachers 'rooted and grounded in love' (Ephesians 3,18).*

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## PREFACE

To enrich the life and work of the Catholic Teacher the Association has decided to draw up a Code of Ethics which will give guidance, support and encouragement. Laws and Regulations provide a framework but a personal Code will provide inspiration, commitment and mutual accountability. This Code, ratified at the Annual General Assembly on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1997, is now ready for use. It has been tried and tested and as it passes into the lives of our teachers it becomes a sign of hope and a beacon for the future.

# CODE OF ETHICS

FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION  
OF SLOVENIAN CATHOLIC TEACHERS

## 1. Purpose

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<sup>1</sup> *Terminological difficulty:* because the members of the Association come from various educational professions (school teachers and professors; teachers at nursery schools, boarding schools and education centres; counsellors; psychologists, defectologists, pedagogues, social pedagogues) choosing an expression suitable for all professions has been a matter of some difficulty. Up until now we have avoided this difficulty by using the word 'pedagogue' for everyone who teaches and educates regardless of the field of education and the type of work they do. In this document the word 'teacher' is the term used most frequently, and should be taken to denote everyone who teaches and educates. We also use the words 'member of the Association' in order to avoid possible confusion as to who it is that the code of ethics is addressing.

For this text the use of "he" – 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular male – presupposes both male and female teachers and students and is used solely for ease and comprehension.

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## 2. Starting points

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Association of Slovenian Catholic Teachers<sup>1</sup> has decided to draw up a code of ethics for its members. As teachers we are guided by laws and rules but we nevertheless feel that for our work we also need an internal orientation. This is the law of love which is written in our hearts together with the call of God and this engenders a feeling of empathy for the young people with whom we travel part of the journey of their development and maturation.

Education is of such vital importance for the development of the individual and the community that it should never be left to arbitrariness and chance. Alongside good legislation and a solid material basis it is the example of the teacher that is of greatest importance. A school is as good as the people in it.

A code of ethics strengthens our identity as teachers and influences the way the profession is seen in society. It is also important for professional solidarity among teachers. It protects teachers from unfounded criticism when those concerned have acted in accordance with the spirit of the code of ethics.

In designing the code we have proceeded from the following principles:

- The purpose of education is to form mature, independent, free and creative people who develop their physical, mental and spiritual capabilities and are able to lead a responsible life and cooperate with others in

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## I. Purpose

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## 2. Starting points

### 1. The teacher, the moulder of the individual

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the family, the workplace, in political activity and in the community and social life. The student is an independent personality and therefore the subject and not merely the object of education. We want him to become a happy person.

- Education and knowledge are values which establish in a person an appropriate attitude to the whole of existence and truth. They help him to become familiar and understand the world and the events which take place in it, thus developing and enriching his spiritual life. They teach people how to make a contribution to humanity, justice and peace, and to plurality and democracy.

- After the student, *the teacher* is the most important person in the school and is therefore the focus of attention of this code. The teacher's ideals, goals, values, education and breadth of commitment are reflected in the process of education. Therefore those whose choice is the teaching profession are bound to live and behave in accordance with the ideals and guidelines of their profession.

- The Gospel is the source of inspiration for our work. The members of the Association are for the most part Catholics and therefore our Teacher is Jesus Christ, God made Man, and Man resurrected from the dead. In His teaching and example we find the most original and genuine human values. In His sensitive relationship with people, especially the most needy, we find the pedagogical sense and humanist attitude we desire.

## Education for values

## II. WHO THE TEACHER IS

### ● Attitude to creation

The teacher leads his students towards the discovery, the knowledge and admiration of a world which is interesting,

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mysterious, good, rich and beautiful. In doing so he helps them develop their various gifts and capabilities: perception, emotions, reason, imagination, will, creativity and an ethical and religious sense. He helps them develop a sense of observation, analysis and wonder, and a positive and responsible attitude to nature. He encourages them to discover the riches, meaning and sanctity of human life, and thus helps them to respect it and behave responsibly towards it.

### ● Shaping a positive self-image

The teacher tries to ensure that every student is accepted, respected and loved by their parents, teachers and schoolmates. He helps students develop a healthy attitude to themselves, to accept, respect and love themselves, and to develop self-confidence and a positive self-image. When necessary he helps the student confront rejection and desertion by their parents (violence, divorce, physical separation, death), their schoolmates (lack of acceptance, rejection, bullying), and others.

### ● Community life

Students learn community living and to form an educational community in an atmosphere of genuine trust and dialogue with their teachers, other staff in the school and their fellow students. Thus they will be capable of forming other communities. He helps the young to be able to socialise confidently through good communication skills, in free time activities and informal social gatherings.

### ● Education for values

The teacher helps his students get to know and understand fundamental values, encourages them to choose and internalise them, and to reject false values, bad habits and addictions. He helps them to develop the strength to resist these. Students are encouraged to evaluate what they are studying. The teacher tries to link the development of students' abilities to that of a sense of solidarity. His guidance enables students

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## 2. Co-shaper of the school

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to become sensitive and attentive to others, sympathetic to those who are suffering, and ready to sacrifice themselves for others.

### ● Confronting the weight of the world

The teacher explores the ways of the world in terms of injustice, dangers, violence and traps which they encounter in life with his students.

He guides them to respect human freedom and to prevent manipulation and all other forms of dehumanisation. He enables them to confront the reality of social structures which can also be unjust and sinful. He teaches them to evaluate unjust structures critically and to create only those which serve the common good and stimulate tolerant, respectful and sympathetic co-existence. He helps them to strive actively for peace and justice.

### ● Educational community

The teacher builds genuine relationships of trust and cooperation between teachers, students and parents. He strives to ensure that the learning process takes place in a suitable intellectual and moral environment. He tries to create a healthy atmosphere for the educational community, which should bind everyone together in the school regardless of their position. He creates a school environment with a prevailing atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, where the challenge of being a human being can be faced with sincerity.

### ● Co-shaper of education

As a professional the teacher takes part in the shaping of his own school and the education system as a whole. He takes an active part in the running of the school and in planning and implementing the school programme. In so far as it is his responsibility, he cooperates in the development of the education system and changes therein. He contributes to the development of the teaching profession and in his particular field.

### 3. The School a Resource for the Family

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### 4. Co-creator of culture

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### 5. Co-shaper of the environment

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The teacher is aware that the family plays a key role in the development of a child's personality. He respects the fact that parents have the first right and responsibility for the upbringing and education of their child, and therefore cooperates with them. He cultivates an open dialogue with them and gives them the opportunity to take part in decisions relating to the development and learning of their children. In planning and implementing the teaching programme, he takes into account the observations and opinions of the parents. He participates in education designed for parents and in counselling on learning and education.

The teacher communicates the fundamentals of their own culture (acculturation) to students. In doing so he completes the process begun by the students' parents.

He is positively open to this culture but is also critical, and teaches this to the students. It is particularly important to differentiate between the culture of life and the culture of death. A teacher cannot remain unconcerned by the fact that many young people are attracted by various harmful influences which are the product of modern society such as drug dealers, those selling alcohol to young people, leaders of violent gangs, etc.

The role of the teacher is not merely to communicate culture but also to *shape it*. As a teacher and creative human being he responds to the issues of time and place (inculturation). His response means co-creating the culture of the environment. The light of the Gospel enables him to understand life in an original way thus permitting culture to be enriched and in this way dispelling prejudices which can influence fixed patterns of thinking.

The teacher respects the context in which his students live. He maintains an awareness of factors in the environment beyond the school and tries to evaluate how these factors

### 3. The School a Resource for the Family

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#### 1. Creativity

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#### 2. Knowledge, the source of activity

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### 5. Co-shaper of the environment

influence behaviour. He actively cooperates in the social activities of the area in which he lives, and by doing so helps to contribute to a better community environment.

**H**e stimulates an interest in happenings in the environment in his students and gets them used to evaluating events. He encourages them to tackle contemporary issues so that they will be able to avoid previous mistakes and prepare a better future for all people.

## III. PROFESSIONALISM

**T**he teacher, as a professional, is a creative person and is therefore open to changes and seeks new knowledge and solutions. Simultaneously he thinks critically about innovations in his professional field and in teaching in general.

**K**nowledge is the great treasure chest for teacher to achieve his goal. The teacher builds on his general and professional background and education by means of continually keeping informed and abreast of developments in his particular field by reading professional literature.

**H**e takes part in conferences, study groups, seminars, congresses and other forms of professional training. Education enables the teacher to carry out his work in a totally professional manner in accordance with the requirements of academic, pedagogical and ethical norms. He needs to supplement training in his own subject field with an understanding of human nature in its entirety and an awareness of its paths of development.

### 3. The pedagogical approach

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### 4. The pedagogical model

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By choosing the teaching profession and understanding the processes and techniques of teaching and learning, the teacher assumes an important role of helping young people to learn and thus to mature. He therefore needs to be continually aware of developments in methods, curricula and materials. He assumes any necessary roles in the staff room and professional working group. He teaches according to tested and effective educational programmes. He uses successful forms and methods of teaching. He is aware that expediency, the right measure, and clarity of expectations are the most important criteria in determining the level of burdening of his students. When working with students he predominantly uses the spoken word.

The teacher is aware that every educational process takes place in a specific context, and thus will do any necessary researches to become totally aware. Education is based on experience and therefore the teacher tries to build new knowledge interns of the student's personal experience. If the student does not have such a relevant experience the teacher will look for form of work which will enable him to acquire it. He builds *reflection* into schoolwork as a key element of learning. This enables students to discover the importance and consequences for mankind in the learning material. The teacher chooses teaching methods which accelerate consistent research, understanding and evaluation. A good knowledge and understanding of contents, events, phenomena and values enables the students to act creatively and effectively. Therefore the teacher encourages and monitors the decisions and activities of the students. He offers them the opportunity to test their values in real-life circumstances and judge them critically. Every stage of education and educational procedures concludes with *evaluation*. Thus the teacher can check which stage of the process the student has reached, assess where he is himself and thus plan further stages of learning.

## 1. Respecting the rights of the child

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*Compare the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia.*

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## IV. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The teacher provides all students with the same opportunities in their education. He does not differentiate between students and respects them regardless of race, sex, language, creed, political or other belief, national, ethnic or social origin, wealth or any other position or characteristic of the student, their parents or guardians.<sup>2</sup>

The teacher respects the fact that the student is a unique and complete person, this is reflected in his attitude to the students in every aspect of the school's life and work. The students' understanding of the subject matter and realisation of the value of education is paramount and outweighs all other prescribed or planned activities or those governed by strict time constraints. The teacher treats the student as an individual, failure to do so is often a result of haste, routine, questionable success or a fact of apparent objectivity.

He is aware, and makes the student aware, that a poor grade or unjustified absence does not mean non-acceptance of the student as a person.

The teacher attempts to secure students from violent classmates, other disruptive elements and from harmful external influences such as drugs, alcohol, sexual abuse, the abuse of young people for commercial purposes or anything which might lead to a lack of self-respect.

The teacher recognizes that the student expects to be treated in a way similar to that at home. The teacher should not display behaviour that might satisfy any of his own tendencies like aggression, domination, ambition, etc.

The teacher helps the student to be able to make ethical judgements respecting human dignity, fundamental values, rights and responsibilities.

## 2. Respecting the rights of the family

### 1. Respecting the rights of the child **32**

The teacher respects and heeds the parents as the child's most important guardians and teachers. He cooperates with them in the important task of the child's education. He offers the parents professional help in bringing up their children. He helps them to get to know, understand and accept their child as being unique. He communicates observations to them on a regular basis about the development and achievements of their child, and strives constantly with them for the child's greater well-being.

The teacher acquaints the parents of the values and goals of the school and with the contents, methods and resources of educational work. In planning and carrying out educational work the teacher respects and heeds the beliefs and views of the parents. He supports the parents in their mutual relationship and cooperation with the teachers and governors of the school. He respects the right and duty of the parents to protect their children from everything which the school might do, even inadvertently, contrary to generally recognised positive educational endeavours.

The teacher deals responsibly with information on students and their families. He protects the personal dignity of students and their family members.

### 3. Protection of the school's integrity **35**

A school is autonomous and has its own integrity, and no-one may arbitrarily encroach upon it. With the school governors and educational and local authorities, the teacher strives to protect the school's integrity, for example misuse of the school and its surroundings for drug dealing, sale of alcohol and tobacco or the advertising of commercial products. He also strives to protect it from the influence of questionable ideologies and sects.

As a professional the teacher respects confidential information.

## 4. Protection of the status, professionalism and reputation of the teaching profession

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The teacher strives to protect the reputation of his profession by ensuring that his work is professional and responsible, and by means of self-confidence, professional consciousness and professional behaviour, through his influence on the public, and by being a person for others.

The teacher is responsible to the child, the child's parents, the national community and the state. He must behave in accordance with the laws and regulations of the state and the school. But the teacher is not merely a state official: he is autonomous in his professional and moral judgements. This right may not be encroached upon by anyone. The teacher therefore retains the right of conscientious objection in cases where a law or regulation goes against the fundamental values which the teacher's conscience tells him are a *sine qua non*. The teacher's freedom is thus reflected in an autonomous moral judgement which goes beyond heteronomy, subordination, dependence or conformity. His moral judgement should not be based only on the law but also on fundamental human values. For these reasons his work is not limited to the needs of everyday politics.

## V. PERSONAL GROWTH

The teacher faces numerous challenges. Two are worthy of special mention.

### ● The stress of work

The teacher's work is demanding and frequently stressful. Many factors influence his work: social, political, historical and cultural factors, his own mental state, personal life, illness, the school environment, indiscipline, the collapse of educational structures and generational differences. Young people today are increasingly demanding and the exodus of teachers from the teaching profession is a

## 4. Protection of the status, professionalism and reputation of the teaching profession

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## 2. Areas

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cause for concern. The undervaluing of the profession, routine, weariness, low motivation and lack of independence are phenomena which paralyse the success of the teacher's work.

### ● The importance of the teacher's work

The teacher helps to shape the personalities of new generations by developing their talents and forming a positive attitude to work, creativity and life. Because of this his work is extremely responsible and at the same time brings a great deal of satisfaction. Young people's growth depends on the people who educate them. If the teacher is successful he is in a strong position of influence: his work is thus extremely important for society, and exceptionally necessary for young people since it can prevent many personal tragedies but irresponsible behaviour on the other hand can precipitate them. The success of the teacher's work is measured by the extent to which his words correspond to his actions.

Because of the stress and importance of the work of the teacher, care for his own personality must be a matter of special emphasis. The more the teacher does for his own personal growth, the more he will be able to give to others.

### ● Mental health

A balance of hard work, healthy recreation and rest, emotional tension and relaxation, teaching and self-education is the way to success, satisfaction and a healthy life. Only a teacher who is suitably healthy can have a long and successful career in the teaching profession.

### ● Well-developed interpersonal relations

The teacher knows that relationships are the key to education. He therefore tries to maintain well-developed, warm and demanding relationships at all levels: in his family and among friends, in class and in the staff room, in and out of school. Such relationships are both a reflection of and the source of a healthy life and a reliable way to help students.

## ● Internalising fundamental values

Because life frequently involves conflict and confusion, the teacher needs a clear scale of internalised values which are a signpost and internal source of his personal and professional decisions. Internalised values are a precondition for professional and ethical action. The teacher who is internally free and independent, who seeks the truth and does what is good, who strives for peace and justice, who is a person of dialogue and truly respects the different opinions of others, who goes beyond his own limitations and has a sense of humour and is open to his fellow human beings, will communicate these values to the young in all their fullness and meaning, since they constitute the basis of a human, democratic and pluralistic society.

## ● Spiritual growth

The members of the Association show adequate concern for their own spiritual growth. They open themselves to the Spirit which "leads them into the all thrust", and they seek a time of silence and peace when they can contemplate their actions before God, examine their attitudes, weigh up their plans and discover God's message. They are open to the infinite and personal God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. With their brothers and sisters in the Church they seek ways of realising God's Kingdom, and loving in particular those who are most in need. In this they are helped by the Sacraments, a constant source of grace, and the teachings of the Church, a lasting treasury of wisdom.

The teacher cares in various ways for his physical health, his mental strength and his spiritual well-being. He himself bears the principal responsibility for his personal growth. He must also realise his desires and needs for growth via the Association, which organises spiritual retreats, workshops (e.g. the Personal Diary), and other ways (self-help groups, Balint Groups). Spiritual guidance is a tested method which serves many people. Spiritual reading is a source of new understanding and examination of the course of one's life.

## VI. CONNECTIONS

**The** teacher cannot carry out his mission alone. In order to increase the quality and success of his work he forges connections with his colleagues. Group work and mutual cooperation are very important for his professional growth.

**Within** the school he interacts with his colleagues in the staff room, in his subject working group, in other professional working groups and with the parents.

**Outside** the school he cooperates as necessary with institutions, education centres, societies, associations and state education bodies.

**Relationship** among members is one of the goals of the Association. We are a community in which we offer each other friendly support, exchange experiences and seek answers to the challenges of the time. Together we discover the different dimensions of the teaching profession and enjoy our pedagogical vocation.

## VII. VOCATION

**Being** a teacher is beautiful, responsible and difficult all at the same time. The nature of his work means that a teacher is a person who works for others, and therefore a feeling for people is of key importance. The ability to understand others, to empathise with them, to accompany them, to get close to them and also to leave them alone, presupposes the teacher's freedom, which is free from inappropriate inclinations. Inner freedom and responsibility enable him to accompany young people on their road to independence. It is a solid and untroubled relationship, free of ties and dependence.

**The** Catholic teacher knows that his vocation is a gift from God. When he chooses this profession he is following an internal call born in time and space

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## VI. CONNECTIONS

as fact of life. In this way he becomes part of a great family which shares a common mission and cooperates with it. Because he is aware of the importance of this mission, he cooperates actively in improving the image and status of the teacher. So that the talents of young people are not lost, he encourages pedagogically gifted people to choose the teaching profession and to remain in it.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

**The members of the Association of Slovenian Catholic Teachers** accept this Code of Ethics as to be morally binding. Actions in clear contravention of this Code shall be dealt with by the Association's honour tribunal.

**The Association binds itself to intercede on behalf of any teacher whose personal or professional integrity is encroached upon.**

The Code of Ethics was passed at the Annual General Assembly of the Association of Slovenian Catholic Teachers which took place in Ljubljana on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1997.

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## **A short history of the Association of Slovenian Catholic Teachers**

It began in Ljubljana in 1989. Professional teachers and educators studied both the role and mission of the Christian Teacher. Spiritual Retreats and Workshops helped teachers to explore the need to support each other in the task of educating the child spiritually and professionally.

The Association, now formally established, operates in regional groups. There are further connections with Slovenian Teachers in neighbouring countries and in Argentina. We are also affiliated to the European Association of Catholic Teachers (SIESC).

### **Goals of the Association:**

To help its members function in a truly professional way.

To link together people, knowledge, ability, expertise and shared values.

To stimulate and promote the personal development of the teacher.

To deepen the commitment of the teacher to the task of educating the students.

The regional groups hold various meetings designed to allow the exchange of experience and ideas and to improve professional proficiency or increase spiritual depth. The Association also runs specialised training programmes for teaching staff and programmes on compulsory secondary school study courses.

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