

**CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN BENEDICTINE SCHOOLS,  
THE EXPERIENCE OF MANQUEHUE**

**SUMMARY**

The educational ethos of the Manquehue Movement is based on a personal encounter with the Risen Christ who speaks to each one of us. We believe that to educate is to teach our students how to listen and how to respond to the Lord's Word with the talents he has given us. 'Tutoría' is the work of welcoming the young, of getting involved and spending time with them, and it is essential to incline the ear of their hearts to the Word of God. This vision manifests itself in a variety of initiatives and activities that we have developed in our schools, and it is these which we wish to share with you in this keynote speech. We will also point out some elements of these initiatives that we think are key to their success.

This presentation is an extension of the talk "A New Benedictine School", given by the founder of the Manquehue Movement, José Manuel Eguiguren, to the first BENET conference in Worth, England in 1999. The text can be found both in English and Spanish on the BENET website: [www.b-e-net.org](http://www.b-e-net.org)

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## 1. OPENING WORDS AND INTRODUCTION

This presentation on Christian formation in the Manquehue Apostolic Movement will begin by considering the context of our work as educators both in today's world in general and also here in Chile. It will then cover some specific examples of things that we have been doing here in Manquehue and which have been successfully put into practise. After this, it will highlight aspects which are common to these experiences and which we consider to have been key to their success. Finally it will look to the future, before ending with a few concluding words.

The basis upon which our educational work is founded can be seen in the talk given by José Manuel Eguiguren at the first BENET meeting in Worth in 1999. The text of the speech is available, in English and Spanish, on the BENET website<sup>1</sup>. The matters that I will be talking about today are a progression from those same ideas, which continue to be the basis of our work.

We do not undertake this presentation without some trepidation. Our motive for giving it was a request from ICBE<sup>2</sup>, who thought it appropriate that the BENET meeting here in Chile should take into account 'the grace of place'. We hope, in speaking about ourselves and about what we are doing, to give glory to God and to unite ourselves even more closely with each of you, in the vocation that we share.

We begin by explaining the context of our educational work: looking at the cultural situation in which we live, and the educational vision of the Manquehue Movement.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.b-e-net.org](http://www.b-e-net.org)

<sup>2</sup> ICBE is the International Commission on Benedictine Education, founded by the Abbot Primate at the second meeting of BENT in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 2002.

## **2. THE CONTEXT**

### **a. Changes in the World and in Chile since 1999**

Today the World is not the same as it was when the first BENET meeting took place in 1999. A few examples will do to illustrate the magnitude of the cultural change which we have undergone at an international level in less than ten years: in 1999 the attacks of 9/11 had not taken place, 'the war on terror' had not yet started; the scandals that have affected the Church – principally, although not exclusively, in Europe and the United States – had not yet broken into the news; mobile phones and the internet were only recently beginning to be widely accessible; the extent of the influence of the Chinese economy was not well-known, and global warming was not yet a matter of public concern.

Chile has participated in this incredibly rapid and profound cultural change. The economic reforms initiated in Chile in the mid-1980's – anticipating, in free-trade and neo-liberal economic strategies, a tendency that was subsequently experienced worldwide, after the fall of the iron curtain – have brought a noticeable material prosperity to our country. This economic growth however, has exacted a high price from Chile in terms of cultural identity, the unity of families and the religious perceptions of its people. A national birth rate that will not even sustain our population level raises profound questions in our Latin American heart. At the same time, growing inequality in the distribution of wealth makes us question just how lasting this prosperity may be.

To highlight a few of the effects of these cultural changes on our work in education: the pressure for results created by the ranking systems; an excessive individualism; a consumerism which is more deeply-seated by the day; commercial or legal considerations coming to dominate peoples' ways of relating to each other; the weakening of the family; suspicion and the obsession with security, are all illustrative examples of the environment in which we find ourselves educating the young. The traditional values and points of reference for our society have been uprooted by a process of cultural change which is driven by commerce and brought about principally via the media and communications industries. We can no longer take for granted a certain basis of religion, values, culture and family that we were able to count on until only a few years ago.

In the document published by the recent General Conference of CELAM<sup>3</sup> in Aparecida, Brazil, the Latin American bishops explained the consequences of these changes on education: *recent educational reforms being implemented on our Continent, driven by the need to adapt to the new demands being created by global change, appear to be prevalingly focused on the acquisition of knowledge and skills and indicate a clearly reduccionist anthropological vision, as they consider education principally in terms of production, competitiveness and the market.*<sup>4</sup>

I have explained these things because, although Chile is at the ends of the earth, I think we share with all of you the difficulties which are the hallmark of our times.

#### **b. Founding principles for the Manquehue vision of education.**

The Manquehue Apostolic Movement is a Private Association of Lay Faithful in the Church of Santiago, whose members seek to live out their baptism in the deepest sense, following the Rule of St Benedict and in filial communion with the Catholic Diocesan Bishop. Its members are organized as if in concentric circles, according to their differing degrees of participation and commitment. At the heart of these concentric circles lies the Community of Manquehue Oblates, which is the equivalent for us of your monastic community.<sup>5</sup> Our main work is in education.

Our vision of education springs from the experience that lies at the root of our vocation as oblates and consists of a personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God.<sup>6</sup> Jesus Christ is alive and he speaks to us each day, in lectio divina, face-to-face, as a man speaks with his friend.<sup>7</sup> This encounter changes our lives and our way of thinking. In the light of God's having made known his love for us, nothing is ever the same again.<sup>8</sup> This encounter defines the meaning of our lives, and hence our vision of education.

Who really knows what each boy or girl is called to in their lives? Who can really love them in the way that their heart yearns for? Who can truly clarify the meaning of their gifts or defects? Where is the explanation for their having coming to us? Even in these times of

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<sup>3</sup> CELAM is the Episcopal Council for Latin America and the Carribean. In May 2007, the Fifth General Episcopal Conference for Latin America and the Carribean took place at the Shrine of Aparecida in Brazil. This quote is taken from the Conclusions of that Conference.

<sup>4</sup> Aparecida Document (DA) 328.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. The Little Rule for Oblates (MRO) 1

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lk 9, 20

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ex 33, 11

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jn 8, 12

advanced technology, high-tech communication and dizzy cultural change, our human existence continues to remain a mystery which can only find its ultimate answer in the person and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

This is the reason why, for us, education in its essence must consist of making time to be available for young people and teaching them *lectio divina*, as someone once did with me. Someone helped me to incline the ear of my heart, not so much through persuasive argument, but rather by ‘wasting time’ on me, being like a father to me<sup>9</sup> and not being afraid to love me.<sup>10</sup> To educate is to do the same with children: it is to see and to adore Christ himself present in each one of them;<sup>11</sup> it is to open one’s heart to love them, even if that makes us weak and vulnerable; it is to put aside one’s own thoughts and tasks in order to listen to them, to meet their needs, allowing them to feel entitled to take up our time in order to share their thoughts and concerns.<sup>12</sup> This relationship, which in Manquehue we call ‘Tutoria’, is a way of bringing children to Christ,<sup>13</sup> the True Master, in order that he may speak to them and teach them. To be a tutor is to be like the friend of the bridegroom who *‘is filled with joy at the bridegroom’s voice.’*<sup>14</sup> Tutoria is the bedrock of our educational ethos and mission.

Sometimes, as educators, we may have the sensation of having to load a computer hard-drive with all sorts of knowledge and skills, as if we had to provide our students with a complex tool-box. When we consider Christian education it is easy to think of it as adding just one more tool, rather than thinking from the point of view of bringing everything together under Christ, as head.<sup>15</sup> But the tools are worth nothing if we don’t know what they are for. Each young person in our schools has received a vocation from God. This vocation constitutes their most profound identity and their means to become one with Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup> That vocation is the blue-print for the use of all the skills which we may be able to give them. The true value of any particular knowledge or skill may only be considered in direct relation to this vocation. For this reason, we think that to educate is to teach our young people how to listen to the Lord, *‘attending to him with the ear of their*

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. RB Prologue 1

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Little Rule for Oblates (MRO) 7

<sup>11</sup> Cf. RB 53, 1.7.14

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 1 Thess 1, 8-9

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 11, 2

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jn 3, 29

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Eph 1, 10

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Gal 2, 20

*heart*<sup>17</sup> and teaching them *‘to use the good things he has given us by seeking to obey his will for us.’*<sup>18</sup> This concept of education means turning the process of loading the hard-drive on its head: truly listening to Jesus Christ in the Word will almost always mean that personal plans and ambitions, which society, family or we ourselves have sown in the hearts of our young people, will be uprooted or dismantled.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. RB Prologue 1

<sup>18</sup> Cf. RB Prologue 6

<sup>19</sup> Cf. For example: Abraham (Gn 12), Moses (Ex 3), Jeremiah (Jer 1), Mary of Nazareth (Lc 1, 26-38), the first disciples (Mk 1, 16-20 par.)

### **3. NEW EXPERIENCES IN CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN MANQUEHUE, IMPLEMENTED SINCE 1999**

I will now explain five specific initiatives that we have developed and implemented in Manquehue since 1999 and which may be considered in conjunction with the other examples of Christian formation mentioned by José Manuel in the first BENET meeting at Worth.

These five initiatives are: the Cunaco Group; the School for Formation in San José de Mallin Grande; the organization of the Community of Manquehue Oblates into Deaneries; our participation in World Youth Days and the new work undertaken in collaboration with the Communities and Schools of Ampleforth, St Louis and Downside.

#### **a. The Cunaco Group**

##### **(What is the Cunaco Group?)**

As some of you already know, the Cunaco Group is a community of friends who meet once a year in order to pray, grow in friendship, think and work together in the field of Benedictine Education<sup>20</sup>. The Cunaco Group was founded as a result of a conversation in a 'pub' during the first BENET meeting at Worth. Through the Cunaco Group, the Lord, who had called us to educate according to the Rule of St Benedict, has provided us with a group of friends with whom to share this vocation. Since the year 2000 we have met once a year, which has often required a great deal of effort, especially as the purpose of our meetings was not particularly clear at the beginning.

##### **(Teachers' Retreats)**

From early on, we saw that we needed a practical project which would enable us to work together and would give an initial and workable expression to our wider ideal. This first project took the form of a program of retreats for teachers, which was put into practice in 2003. I will not go into detail about these retreats, as they were explained during the BENET meeting at Delbarton in 2005. We can resume some of their benefits in four points:

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<sup>20</sup> The Cunaco Group is formed of member from the monastic communities of Ampleforth and Worth (England), St Louis (USA), Sao Geraldo (Brazil), and members of the Manquehue Apostolic Movement (Chile).

- There are important aspects of our vocation to educate which we have been able to share with our teachers, not simply through words, but rather by allowing them to live that same experience of love by which God called us to educate.
- Through this sharing we have grown in friendship with our teachers, which has led to the Community of Oblates and the school community growing closer.
- There has been a change in the way our teachers approach their work in the schools, as they have come to recognize one another as people who form part of a school community, and not as independent professionals in an organization where each person plays a strictly separate part.
- Finally, the teachers' retreats have provided a special opportunity for our schools to work together because we have had to help and support one another in order to organize them.

### **(Reflection and documents)**

The Cunaco Group has also become a place for systematic thinking on important subjects concerning Benedictine education. After eight years, in addition to having many edifying conversations, we have put together a small collection of very useful documents. These cover: academic life in a Benedictine school, Catholic education, the spiritual formation of young people, the relationship between the monastic community and the school community, discipline, teachers, and 'Tutoría', amongst others. This opportunity to reflect together has been of great importance for example in the development of the Manquehue's Educational Mission Statement and Ethos which, after years of work, was finally published in 2006.

We all know how difficult it is to raise our heads to look beyond the abundant and absorbing daily work of a school. Thanks to the Cunaco Group we have been encouraged to reflect seriously on what we do.

### **(A community of friends)**

However, I think that the most important contribution of the Group to our educational work has been the friendship that has grown up amongst its members. In Cunaco we have not only found ideas: The best thing about the experience is to have been able to be part of a committed group of friends who give us great joy, who renew our enthusiasm for what we

do, and who have given us the courage to move forward in directions in which we would not have dared to go alone.

### **(Other Cunacos)**

Three final points about Cunaco. Firstly that the members who make up the group are not those that a decision based upon common sense would have gathered together. Secondly, that the first conversation in the 'pub' could easily have come to nothing. And thirdly, throughout the years there have been many very sensible reasons to not continue our work together. I say this because I believe that Cunaco was born from obedience to a call from God to grow in friendship, and maybe the Lord would wish to gather others in similar groups.

### **b. The School for Formation at San José de Mallín Grande**

From 1995 until 1997, the Manquehue Movement worked in Santo Americo School in Sao Paulo, Brazil. During this time we invited several young people to share our work evangelising in the school. We quickly realised that one of the most important results of this mission was the experience of community life, study and missionary work that these young people shared over the course of a year. We therefore began to offer the experience of living in community for a short period of time to university students of the Movement in Santiago. The results were positive, but something was missing: the project lacked the geographical cloister, provided by the distance that in Brazil allowed the young people to concentrate on living the experience without the constant distraction of their family, their studies and their friends. We therefore began to look for a more isolated location where we might establish a Community and set up a Project for the Formation of the young people of the Movement.

This is how the Formation Houses in San José de Mallín Grande began in Chilean Patagonia, some two thousand five hundred kilometers south of Santiago, in one of the most remote and least explored parts of our country. There, far away from everything, surrounded by mountains, ice fields and virgin forests, on the shores of a huge lake, we offer to young men and women an experience of Christian formation that lasts for four months. This experience has been shared by small groups of four or five young people each term since 2001. From 2003 onwards, we have been offering the same experience to young women through a second community house.

The living facilities in the Formation Houses in San José are very simple. The houses are built of wood according to local techniques, there is no electricity, water is piped from a

waterfall close-by, the heating and the cooking depend on wood from the farm and bread must be made each day. The nearest village is half-an-hour away by car. This is where the community attends Sunday Mass. The parish priest visits them every so often to hear their Confession, and allows them to reserve the Blessed Sacrament for daily Communion in Lauds. The young people taking part in formation talk by telephone once every fifteen days with their families and friends. The day is structured around the Divine Office and includes lectio divina in the morning and evening, work in the house and on the farm, an hour of study and reading and another hour of 'collatio', focused on Christian formation, the Church and the Benedictine tradition. On Sundays and other feast days the Community organises day-trips either by car or on horseback: the immense and awe-inspiring Patagonian landscape appears at every turn. This spectacle is portrayed for the young by Biblical readings, and especially the Psalms, as being a true revelation of God.

It is easy to imagine San José as being like a dream, and in fact it is, despite the enormous difficulties. It is difficult for a small community of oblates to establish themselves in Patagonia and learn to live there. The efforts seemed disproportionate, and all in order to receive only two groups of four young people per year, especially given the considerable demands of our schools in Santiago. Neither has it been easy to persuade young people to take part in the experience: in general they are enthusiastic about the idea, but are held back by their studies, their friends, or simply on account of being afraid. Sometimes they encounter strong opposition from their families, especially the girls. The experience itself is not an easy one to live: to come face to face with yourself, with no room putting on an act or to hide behind a mask, to come up against, and have to acknowledge, one's physical and moral limitations,<sup>21</sup> and also to discover other people and to have to learn to live with them. Obedience is difficult. Finally, it is difficult to return to Santiago, to their daily lives, after having learned to perceive reality from an utterly different viewpoint.

Despite the difficulties, however, or maybe as a direct result of them, young people in San José are deeply happy. The experience is especially powerful, because in San José the things that one supposedly needs to be happy are notable by their absence: it is a place where things are very basic, where being 'in touch', or at the hub of what is going on in the world, is absolutely impossible and there is certainly nothing prestigious about the experience. There is little going on, save for the daily rhythm of work, study and prayer. All that one has is the love that God manifests for each person in his Word and the love of

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. RB 72, 5

one's friends, lived out from each one's own real, true and undisguised condition. And this is enough.

Year by year, the Community has welcomed young people and there are now over 80 of them who have taken part in the experience. Some remain in contact with the Movement afterwards and others do not. All of them treasure their time there, however, as one of the most valuable experiences of their lives.

The effect of San José in our schools has been deeply felt, because many of these young people are now working in accompanying the children, in scout groups, as tutors, in the area of the Movement dedicated to the young, forming apostolic groups or lectio divina groups. After their time in San José, they are able to recognize the same elements in the schools which before seemed distant and difficult to understand: the Divine Office, lectio divina, community life and shared work. Their experience in San José gives them a sense of solidarity, both among themselves and also with the Community of Oblates: they feel that people who can understand the experience that they have had, also understand them.

At the end of their time in San José, the young men and women prepare a ten-day retreat for a group of students from our schools, who visit from Santiago during the last week of classes of each term. The school students – aged between 15 and 17 – happily throw themselves into life in San José, excited by the sense of adventure and motivated by the welcome they receive from their new-found older friends. The young men and women, for their part, are full of enthusiasm to pass on what they have lived over the last four months, and by doing so they deepen still further their understanding of all that they have experienced. To date, more than 200 school students have taken part in these retreats.

Over the last few years San José has also held retreats for adults. We have received groups of parents from several schools, including a group from Priory school in Saint Louis in the United States. We have welcomed monks from various monasteries and a novice from the Monastery of Las Condes, who took part in the four-month experience with the young men. This year we have also begun to hold retreats for teachers from our schools.

The School at San José is dedicated to the formation of young people, where these same young people take an active role in the formation of others: school students, other young people and adults.

### c. The Deaneries

Given the growth of our Community and the work we are involved in, we have had to think about the way in which we organise ourselves. It was a comment made in fact by a young person during their time in San José<sup>22</sup> that spurred José Manuel to consider organising the Community of Oblates into Deaneries. The Community of Oblates, as I mentioned earlier, is for us the equivalent of your monastic communities, and the idea of organising it into Deaneries was taken from chapter twenty-one of the Rule of St Benedict. This transition meant that, instead of organising ourselves according to our work and responsibilities, we organised ourselves according to the needs of the people in the Community. This meant establishing a Deanery in each of our schools and also in San José. A Deanery is like a local image of the Community of Oblates, under the care of a Dean. The Dean's main task is to fulfil the role of 'abbot' (or 'abbess') in their Deanery, as delegate of the 'abbot' of the whole community, the Responsible.

The idea may seem to be fairly obvious, but in practise it has brought many challenges. It is difficult, for example, to find a way for someone to dedicate themselves full-time to being a Dean. It is difficult to convince oneself that this work is in fact more important than the many other urgent tasks that compete for our time. It has not been easy for the oblates to belong to the Community in a different way from before. It is difficult for the Deaneries to avoid the tendency to become independent entities. Finally, it has been a challenge to discover the right relationship between the school community and the 'monastic' community, represented by the Deanery, in each of the schools.

It is a matter that is intimately linked with our work in education. The nature and identity of our schools come from the Community that founded them, and upon which they still rely to be founded every day. It is impossible for the school to be truly '*a school of the Lord's service*'<sup>23</sup> unless it is for us a place where we can listen to the Gospel and live it out as members of a community organised according to the Rule of St Benedict. If we find in the life of our school reasons to live and to lay down our own lives then we can give our young people those same reasons. We will not find these reasons unless we are members of a community, unless we are teachers who belong to a community, headmasters who belong to a community, management staff who belong to a community. Community Life according to the Rule of St Benedict is like the oil in the lamps of the wedding attendants who waited

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<sup>22</sup> As Saint Benedict says, '*it often happens that the Lord makes the best course clear to one of the youngest.*' (RB 3, 3)

<sup>23</sup> RB Prologue 45

to greet the bridegroom: without community life, we fear that the Lord – despite all our dedication and hard work – may one day say to us *'In truth I tell you, I do not know you'*.<sup>24</sup>

The Deaneries are not only made up of oblates, but also of other members of the Manquehue Movement and especially of young people who work in the schools. The Deanery structure means that they belong to a community within which they are able to celebrate the Divine Office, share lectio divina, attend lunch or simply share time with other tutors or oblates with whom they are friends. For those who have spent time in San José, to belong to a Deanery allows them to live this same experience in Santiago. The Deaneries teach young people how to live according to the Rule of St Benedict. These young people in turn are able to teach others – students of the school – and also the oblates, as they constantly demand that we be authentic, open to conversion and true to our vocation.

#### **d. World Youth Days**

Since its foundation in 1977, a strong characteristic of the Manquehue Movement has been its committed participation in the pastoral initiatives of the Diocese of Santiago. In 1998 we took part in the organisation of the Continental Youth Encounter which took place in Santiago, but in 1999 we had not yet taken part in the World Youth Days. The first time we participated was in Rome in the year 2000. We then sent a delegation to Toronto in 2002, and in 2005 more than a hundred students from our schools travelled to Cologne and half of these were involved in the Third International Benedictine Youth Congress in Meschede. For our students and alumni, these gatherings have been important milestones in the development of their faith.

#### **(An Ecclesial Experience)**

The experience of belonging to the Church is profound. The young can see how the pilgrimages and missions of the Church of Santiago are one part of the Universal Church. Their personal experience of Jesus Christ finds a connection with the Pope, with their own Bishop, with the sacraments and the magisterium in general. Through the World Youth Days our young people come into contact with a young, vibrant Church, with which they feel identified, which puts forward ideals which they share with thousands of other young people from all around the world, making them want to become active members in her ranks. The Universal Church exists, and to live in the Santiago Church is to be part of it.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Mt 25, 1-13

### **(Community Experience)**

At these gatherings, our young people also live a profound experience of community and of friendship in Christ. They organise the delegations of the Movement into smaller communities of approximately ten people. In these small groups they prepare for the encounter, they live the days of the encounter and sometimes they continue to meet together afterwards. The reason for setting up these small communities is at the same time practical and spiritual. They are organised with a strong emphasis on obedience and on the cloister. These communities give rise to Christ-centred friendships, which reaffirm and sustain the young in their search for God and their commitment to Him, both throughout the encounter itself, and also once they return to their normal lives.

### **(Testimony)**

Our young people often refer to their experience at the World Youth Days when they write their letter to request admittance to the Sacrament of Confirmation. One of them wrote, for example:

*The experience marked me deep down and gave me hope to continue working, as I know I am not alone. Much is said about the youth of today being decadent, but I know that I am not alone: throughout the world there are young people willing to struggle for 'the revolution of love'.<sup>25</sup>*

### **e. Collaborating with the monasteries of the English Benedictine Congregation.**

#### **(The 'Gringos')**

From the beginnings of the 1980's the Manquehue Movement has been receiving old boys of Ampleforth who have come to live and work with us for five or six months during their Gap Year. These visits have been very important for many 'gringos',<sup>26</sup> and also for many of the young people of the Movement who have been given the task of taking care of them. Indeed, the origins of the Community of Manquehue celibate oblates can be traced quite clearly from the first 'gringos houses'. These same houses continue to exist today and - as a result of what I will now go on to explain - this year also received three old boys from Downside.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Address in the Youth Vigil, Cologne 20 August 2005

<sup>26</sup> In Chile the expression 'Gringo' is used to describe any foreign person who speaks English. It has no negative associations.

### **(Pastoral Work in England)**

In the summer of 2004 – summer for us is in January and February – a group of oblates and young people from the Movement were invited to spend two months at Ampleforth. They lived there with the monastic community and worked in the school, setting up lectio divina groups and doing 'Tutoría'. The following year the group included women and another group was invited to carry out similar work at Downside School. In 2007, for the fourth time, groups of young people from Manquehue travelled to Ampleforth and Downside to live and work there over the Summer.

In a similar way to San José, the distance provides a cloister for the young people during these experiences, which is necessary if they are to concentrate on prayer and community life. The experience is further enriched by the witness of the monastic communities and the friendships with the monks, especially the older brethren, which is very moving, both for the young people and for the oblates. Much the same as in San José, there is daily time given over to study and 'collatio'. In addition, a week's holiday in mid-semester offers the possibility of visiting the holy places of the English Benedictine tradition. The young feel an instinctive interest in the lives of men and women like Cuthbert, Bede or Hilda of Whitby. To feel part of the ancient 'mission' of the English Benedictine tradition has been a strong experience of faith and Christian living for all the Chileans, both young people and oblates.

### **(Priory Manquehue)**

Since the first BENET meeting in 1999 we have had a lot of contact with the Community of St Louis in the United States. More than half of their monastic community has visited us here in Chile and many of us – students, oblates and teachers – have spent some time there. In one of the Cunaco meetings we spoke about how we might work together in the formation of young people. Saint Louis Priory School had already begun to implement a 'Tutoría' programme but, for various reasons, the way in which we had been collaborating with Ampleforth and Downside did not seem to be the most appropriate for Priory. As a result, the alternative of bringing a group of Priory tutors to Chile arose. We have now received two groups of more than twenty students, who have come with the Headmaster, Fr. Michael, and several teachers from the school: they stay in the homes of Chilean students and our tutors prepare a fifteen day formation programme for them.

This program has had excellent results. It has given new impetus to 'Tutoría' at Priory as they feel great enthusiasm at seeing other young people who share a similar mission and

because they feel accompanied and strengthened by their friendship with them. At the same time, the experience of receiving Priory students offers our Chilean young people an opportunity to truly value their own charism, because in order to convey the message of 'Tutoría', they must first deepen their own understanding of it. The visits from 'Priory' have awakened a great deal of enthusiasm in our own students for apostolic work, because they realise that what they are doing in 'Tutoría' week-in, week-out is of real importance. For the 'gringos' from Ampleforth and Downside who live with us during their gap years, the experience of the Priory visit has also been very important. As one of them said:

*The experience with the Saint Louis students was really amazing. It was the first time that I really realised what it meant to live for others. I found it difficult to make friends with these loud American youngsters, in fact, I didn't like them very much at first. But I made the effort and in the end I found I really loved them. This is what the Pope was speaking about when he talked about the rich young man; that, when Jesus asks him to give everything he has, this means to give oneself. Because when we cease to worry only about ourselves and we begin to concern ourselves with others, that is when we are truly happy.*

#### **4. KEY ELEMENTS OF THESE EXPERIENCES**

I would now like to highlight what we consider to have been key factors in the success of these experiences. Before this however, it is important to highlight that all of these experiences have taken place in very ordinary and everyday circumstances, with lots of difficulties. We could also mention, for example, some retreats or camps that have worked out badly or have not worked at all. I could tell you about semesters when we have had no young people take part in the experience in San José. I could tell you, like anyone who works in a school environment, about thousands of everyday problems, very often without solutions, that include difficulties in communicating with the students and the parents and all sorts of other mistakes. All of this is part – and an important part - of our work in the formation of young people. Although it wouldn't be worth going into the details of these problems, it is important to be aware that they exist.

##### **(Jesus Christ)**

The first common element of these experiences is the clear and explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, of his presence among us and of lectio divina as a privileged opportunity to encounter Him. At the end of the day, Jesus Christ is the only true evangelizer, the only

one capable of proclaiming the Good News in all its fullness in the inner cloister of the human heart, because he himself is this Good News.<sup>27</sup>

As adults, we often place the emphasis on trying to make young people understand things, in trying to persuade them with convincing arguments, in trying to put across our view of things and motivate them through the clarity of our arguments. I am not saying that this is wrong, in fact I think it's necessary. But when I think of San José, for example, I see in fact that this happens the other way around: first they live out the experience of lectio and community and, then, the study, the reading and the 'collatio' help to explain and permit them to understand what it is that they are living. When I think of our young people who have travelled to England, I see the same thing: it is their contact with the monastic communities that awakens their interest in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon monasticism, and not the other way around. The same is true of the World Youth Days: they don't go there having read the latest documents of the Magisterium, but rather begin to read them having lived an experience of the Church in these encounters. I think the Pope is saying something along these lines, when, in his first encyclical he writes, *'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.'*<sup>28</sup>

### **('Tutoría')**

A second key element is 'Tutoría', which we spoke about briefly at the beginning. José Manuel in his speech at Worth said that *'A tutor might be a senior student, an old boy or old girl or one of the younger members 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 well-being, how they are getting on in school and at home, and through love ensuring that no child feels lost among the crowd.'*<sup>29</sup> 'Tutoría' implies creating spaces where this sort of relationship can be established, where people can meet one another face-to-face and where Christian friendship can flourish. It is for this reason that the Deaneries are so important. This is why we place so much emphasis on working in small communities under the guidance of a tutor, who takes responsibility for each member of his group. This happens in San José, at the teacher's retreats, in the Priory visits, in the visits to England and at the World Youth Days.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jn 1, 45-49; Lk 10, 1; Ap 3, 20

<sup>28</sup> Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 1

<sup>29</sup> 'A New Benedictine School' Worth 1999, José Manuel Eguiguren

To be a tutor is very demanding as it means putting one's own concerns to one side in order to be completely available to love and to give time to those who have been put under my charge, much like a father or mother would. I don't know why exactly, but the reality is that the work of 'Tutoria' is almost always accompanied by a sense of wasting one's time, or that the fruits which it bears don't appear to justify the effort which it requires. This is probably due to the fact that the spiritual accompaniment that the tutor provides does not consist so much in talking, but more than anything else in being available to listen.

### **(To do everything as a member of a community)**

A third common element is that all our work derives from a community, as we spoke about when presenting the Deaneries: working as part of a team, coming to know one another better through our work, and allowing ourselves to be formed by each other. The Student Council, or a group formed for social action, or to organize the work camps and missions, or a group of tutors, all need to be founded upon a community life that will sustain them. For this reason a dinner, a barbecue, a day trip or time dedicated to reflection are by no means a waste of time. Friendship and companionship are a necessary condition for apostolic work and need to be consciously encouraged through specific times for sharing and praying together. Evangelisation is not the individual work of a heroic missionary, but rather it is the work of a Community; and, what is more, it is the fruit of Christian friendship.<sup>30</sup> Even the most charismatic tutor needs to receive the constant formation of a community of tutors who will take care of him, help him to focus himself, keep him in line and educate him. Time and time again we have seen examples of tutors who are not actively involved in the community of tutors becoming *'like a foolish man who built his house on sand.'*<sup>31</sup>

The same can be said about adults, about a Headmaster, about an oblate or a teacher: We too, in order to be prophets, need to belong to prophetic communities in which the prayer of Jesus is fulfilled: *'Just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me.'*<sup>32</sup>

### **(The Rule of St Benedict)**

A fourth key element is the use of the Holy Rule in the organisation of communities which are both evangelised and which in turn evangelise.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes our students are not

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Jn 13, 35

<sup>31</sup> Mt 7, 26

<sup>32</sup> Jn 17, 21

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Paul VI Evangelium Nuntiandi 13

aware that a position of responsibility or certain criteria come from the Rule, but rather they have simply inherited them from their seniors. But they set up a timetable for each day that revolves around the Divine Office and *lectio divina*, and this is taken from the Rule. St Benedict teaches them the way in which they should ask for and give advice. He teaches them how to treat guests, the sick, children, the poor and our elders. He shows them how someone in authority should act, how he or she should serve the Community, the importance of order and discipline, good works, humility and, of course, good zeal.

In his talk at Worth, José Manuel explained some experiences of community life that had begun to develop, for example, the work camps, missions and scouts. Two years ago, having only recently taken up the post of Headmaster, I received a request from the students who were organising the missions to send an 'group in advance' who would need to miss the last day of classes in order to make preparations. I agreed, thinking that it would only be a small group. But when I saw two buses arrive, I realised that the group consisted of almost half the participants: abbots, deans, cellarers, liturgists, cooks, people in charge of community life, or the tools, of evangelisation or of construction. This wasn't a trick designed in order to miss school but rather a genuine means of sharing out the work and making sure that many would feel part of the organisation. When visiting the missions last winter, I was surprised to see the standards of order and responsibility that the students had managed to establish amongst themselves, thanks to the organisation from the Rule. I am still trying to think of how we might translate this into something that we can apply to the everyday life of the school.

### **(Cloister)**

The fifth key element, which is related to the previous one, although it deserves a specific mention, is the idea of a cloister which consists of a degree of separation from the world, which in Manquehue takes a different form from the traditional monastic cloister. In San José or in England, for example, it is naturally created by distance. The fact that there is no telephone or e-mail is not a deficiency, but rather a necessary condition for community life. But it is also possible to apply the concept of the cloister, for example, to the day-to-day life of a university student: by following a fixed timetable, or keeping to a fixed circuit in the round of daily activities, or by setting aside moments of their day, or week, for prayer, for their families or to spend in community. Of course, the help of spiritual accompaniment, from a tutor or guide, in helping to define this cloister is of great importance. But the resulting cloister does not feel in the least like being behind bars, but rather it is a place of freedom, because it allows us to give priority to things that we truly consider to be most important and means that we are able to do what we really want to. The cloister is like a

fortified town, where it is possible to resist being alienated by consumerism or work.<sup>34</sup> It is a place where it is possible to take refuge within one's innermost self.<sup>35</sup> It is a protected space where – despite our weaknesses and inconstant nature – it is possible to grow in love for God and for our brothers and sisters.

The new communication technologies – with all the wonderful possibilities that they bring – are, when thought about from the perspective of the cloister, a real threat to the spiritual formation of young people. A testimony from one of the old boys of Downside who lived this year with us in Santiago illustrates this:

*I found it very difficult to see photos of my friends having a wonderful time in far away places, whilst I was living in an oblates' house in the depths of the Chilean winter. It made me forget the reasons why I had come to Chile in the first place. I had to make great efforts to be able to do lectio and at first I didn't feel it helped me very much at all. The first time I felt God really speaking to me through lectio came after a long, depressing session on the internet. I had gone out to smoke a cigarette and was seriously thinking of leaving Chile and travelling. Just afterwards I went into lectio and the reading of the day was the explanation of the parable of the sower, 'the seed sown in thorns is someone who hears the word but the worry of the world and the lure of riches choke the word'. These words really hit home and gave me a renewed trust in the decision to persevere. I think it was at that point that I decided not to use the internet anymore.*

### **(Mission)**

A sixth key element is the sense of mission. Jesus approaches the Samaritan woman as a man in need: 'Give me something to drink', he says, almost as if he were begging. Jesus often approaches us (be we young people or older) in the same way, almost asking for assistance, needing help, for a specific work or mission. When we respond to this dialogue, which Jesus initiates, he takes delicate control – as the supreme fisher of men and women – and guides things to the point where he begins to manifest himself in us: 'That is who I am, I who speak to you.'<sup>36</sup> Attending to the sick, to the poor, to old people, social justice, missions, work in 'Tutoría', pilgrimages, being in charge of a scout group, are all ways in which the Lord calls young people in order to begin a profound conversation with them and to begin to manifest himself in their hearts. The roles of

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Centesimus Annus 41

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Lk 15, 17 and also The Life of Saint Benedict ('The Dialogues'), Gregory the Great.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Jn 4, 1-26

becoming a disciple and that of taking up a mission are not taken on in successive stages, but rather occur almost simultaneously and in fact are mutually dependent, as they nourish one another. Christ himself sent his disciples on the mission to all the towns of Galilee almost from the beginning of their time together.<sup>37</sup> The lapse between giving and receiving is minimal: an important part of the formation of young people in San José comes about when they welcome the students of the schools, and it is the same with those who take part in the activities in England and for those who work with the Priory students.

Apostolates and service activities are necessary in order to give formation to young people, as they are required to speak of Christ and hence, to take responsibility for their own faith and consciously become active participants in the mission of the Church. It is precisely these type of activities that affirms the sort of faith that José Manuel referred to in his talk at Worth: *'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.'*<sup>38</sup>

### **(Working with the young)**

The seventh, and final, key element is a conscious and determined decision to work with the young. This is not an easy decision to take, because the young do not do things as we would do them: they tend to be less accurate, less careful, their commitment is not always reliable and their planning is usually short-sighted. It is almost certain that a good group of tutors, working in a school will cause headaches for teachers and other members of staff, not because they are bad tutors, but simply because they are young: bad tutors would be tutors who either are not at school enough, or who do not want to assume their important role to the full. To work with young people is made even more difficult when our culture turns parents of the school into 'clients' and we ourselves into 'providers of educational services', from whom they can demand results, immediate satisfaction and no mistakes. But, as Paul VI said, for the young, there are no better apostles than other young people,<sup>39</sup> and we believe that we should persevere in the choice we have made, in their favour, despite all the difficulties that this may bring. To not do so, would be to leave our children without those who are able to accompany them most closely, and would also leave the young without that opportunity of being apostles which they need to be disciples of Christ.

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Mk 6, 7-13 par.

<sup>38</sup> 'A New Benedictine School' José Manuel Eguiguren

<sup>39</sup> Paul VI, Address to the pupils of the Catholic Schools of Rome. 25 February 1978. Also Cf. Evangelium Nuntiandi 72.

## 5. 'TUTORÍA' AS THE SOUL OF A SCHOOL: OUR CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE

'Tutoría as the soul of a school' was a phrase coined by José Manuel in his talk at Worth. We find ourselves coming back to it all the time, and we believe that it describes something that we should focus on for the future. 'Tutoría as the soul of a school' implies finding ways of turning everything we do in the school into 'Tutoría' – which is Christian education, as described at the beginning of this talk. In recent years we have expanded the concept of 'Tutoría' – which had previously been restricted to being one hour in the timetable – in order to allow its spirit to permeate activities such as: scout groups, sports, social projects, work camps, missions and lectio divina groups.

But we still think that there is a long way to go. We want to develop a new pedagogy based on 'Tutoría', to find a way of teaching everything in the curriculum based upon the corner-stone of being available and loving, of listening and of proclaiming the Gospel. In each of our schools there is a Tutoría department, which is most necessary, but it is not in itself enough to make our Educational Mission and Ethos a reality. The fact is that all the departments in the school should place this corner-stone as the foundation of their inter-personal relations and of their work with the students. How can we transform the academic life of a school into a vehicle for evangelisation? How can sports become a way of searching for God? What should our discipline be like if its ultimate aim is that the students should meet Christ? If we are ever able to make 'Tutoría' truly the soul of our schools, these schools would then be places with no dividing line between that which is spiritual and that which is academic, places where every subject and every activity would be considered as if *'they were the sacred vessels of the altar'*,<sup>40</sup> and in this way we would be getting over the division between faith and life which Vatican II considers to be *among the more serious errors of our age*.<sup>41</sup>

An important part of this challenge for the future is that we must think through the whole organisation of our schools according to the Rule of St Benedict – not limiting our thinking to the means of doing things, but also taking into consideration the ultimate aims in doing them. In this way they could come to be more and more fully, schools of the Lord's Service.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> RB 31,10

<sup>41</sup> GS 43

<sup>42</sup> Cf. RB P 45

## 6. CONCLUDING WORDS

I would like to finish with a very brief reflection. In a period of history similar to ours, Benedictine monasteries appeared all over Europe like beacons of light in the midst of a world that was confusing, disorganized and disorientated. Many men and women who were seeking peace found refuge in them. Others, who were parents – like Evitius and Tertullius<sup>43</sup> – while not leaving the world themselves, nevertheless wanted to offer their children the experience of a different kind of society. This could be the mission of Benedictine schools today: to offer the young the experience of living in a Christian community. This experience, like that of the monasteries in Europe, is the seed of a new world and of the ‘civilization of love’.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. RB 59 and also The Life of Saint Benedict (‘The Dialogues’), end of Chapter 3, Gregory the Great.

<sup>44</sup> This expression, first used by Paul VI (Address at the end of the Holy Year, 25 December 1975) has been used frequently in the teachings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.