NEW YORK, June 5, 2019—Fordham University will host more than 500 Catholic school leaders from around the world from June 5 – 8 at its Lincoln Center campus for the Congress of the Catholic International Education Office (OIEC in French). Participants from over 80 countries are attending the Congress whose closing session will take place at the United Nations.

“The Congress is a unique opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities faced by Catholic schools. Our theme this year is educating to fraternal humanism to build a civilization of love,” said Philippe Richard, Secretary General of OIEC.

The Congress takes place at a time when enrollment in Catholic schools is growing rapidly in developing countries, while it is stable or declining in many developed countries. Catholic schools perform a key role not only for the transmission of the faith to students who are Catholic, but also for the health of the global Church. Catholic schools must promote human dignity and integral human development. They are also essential for the new evangelization and the education of future generations of stewards of creation.

Topics to be discussed at the Congress include how to promote a culture of dialogue and peace, how to foster the Christian identity of the schools, how to protect children from all forms of abuse, how to ensure that the schools are inclusive, how to train principals and teachers for today’s realities, how to educate towards sustainability, and how to contribute to dialogue with international organizations.

In addition, Catholic schools also perform an essential role within national education systems in many countries. The schools typically welcome students from all faiths and recent research (*) suggests that they contribute to achieving the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (quality education for all).

- Globally, Catholic schools served 62.5 million children in 2016, an increase in enrollment of almost 28 million children or more than 80% since 1980 when enrollment stood at 34.6 million. In addition, 6 million youth are enrolled in Catholic post-secondary institutions.
- India has the largest enrollment in Catholic schools, followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi. France, the United States, Rwanda, Argentina, and Columbia round up the top 10 countries by total enrollment in pre-primary, primary, and secondary Catholic schools.
- In Africa, Catholic schools enrolled 10.7 percent of all children in school in 2016. Enrollment in Africa accounted for 43.7 percent of total enrollment in Catholic schools globally and this share is expected to continue to rise over time. Catholic and other faith-based schools play an especially important role in sub-Saharan African countries that have been affected by conflict.
- Reaching the poor is a core part of the mission of Catholic schools. In 16 African countries, the share of students from the poorest 20 percent of the population in Catholic and other faith-based schools is at 16.0% versus 8.5% for private secular schools. This suggests that Catholic and faith-based schools reach substantial numbers of very poor students in comparison to private secular schools.
- Catholic schools are often perceived as providing an education of quality that also emphasizes moral values. In Burkina Faso, academic performance, teacher quality, and moral education are
the main reasons for choosing Christian schools. Responding to parental aspirations, Catholic and other faith-based schools, including Islamic schools, help ensure that children stay in school.

- Catholic schools often benefit from only limited or in some cases no funding from states, thereby generating budget savings for governments. In 38 OECD and partner countries, these budget savings are estimated at approximately US$63 billion (in purchasing power parity) per year.

For more information on the contribution of Catholic schools to quality education for all and on the OIEC Congress, see the infographic and factsheet available on the events website of Fordham University's Graduate School of Education.

(*) The findings from recent research are based on analysis by Quentin Wodon, Distinguished Research Affiliate with the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame

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