



## **Prof. Jacqueline Sfeir (1956-2013)** *Heroine of the holistic education system*

**+ Giacinto-Boulos MARCUZZO**

*Titular Bishop of Emmaus, Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem*

### **Presentation.**

- Palestinian of Bethlehem, Catholic of the Latin rite,
- Graduated in Educational Sciences from the University of North Colorado (1984),
- Lecturer of the Catholic University of Bethlehem (1984 for 21 years),
- Consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Laity (5 years),
- Expert at the Pastoral Synod of the Catholic Church of the Holy Land (1995-2000),
- Dean of the Faculty of Education of the University of Bethlehem (1996),
- Assistant of the editorial staff of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in Palestine,
- Founder of **MeDâd** (independent association for the promotion of the "**holistic education system**"),
- Advisor active locally in the Holy Land (Palestine, Israel, Jordan) and in the Arab world (especially Syria, Yemen...) and internationally (Cyprus, UK, USA) of some non-governmental organizations on child education (early childhood and child development) and school curricula.
- Author of many publications, especially in Arabic.

### **Sfeir's holistic education system.**

Her idea, for which she founded the MeDâd (an Arabic acronym which stands for "system for the study and increase of children's programmes") but which was also a feeling, a system, a programme, a culture, a whole life, is the complementarity, solidarity and integration of the educational elements, in what was initially a "global integrative programme" and which she has gradually perfected in the "**holistic educational system**".

It was interesting, and also pleasant as well as useful, to observe that all her books and publications, but also the blackboards where she taught, were always full of drawings, sketches, traces, sketches, illustrative schemes, especially of circocentric circles, typical of her teaching method.

She was popularly called by schoolchildren and teachers: "*The Circle Teacher*". She was a true "heroine" who changed mentality and systems in the Arab world so rooted in the pyramidal, hierarchical culture where the hegemony of adults, especially men, is dominant.

### **Examples**

The person: the spirit, the intellect, the emotions, the physical: each element is a circle that preserves its own identity. But a part of the circle touches and integrates with the parts of the other circles. The set of integrated parts is the successful person.

Education in general: the person, the family, civil society, the religious community. And so on for all the other realities, such as religious education, etc..

Two important notes not only from the geometrical point of view but also from the basic pedagogical philosophy. The circles indicate the autonomy and independence of each element which must be respected. There must be no fusion or confusion, but in respect of one's own identity, there can be harmony and cohesion which together create the great big circle.

In this vision, the most effective aspect is the integrated part of all circles (harmony), but even the non-integrated part is useful for the development of the critical spirit in the person, which is part of educational growth.

### **Also for a Synodal Church.**

Of course it is a special system for education and schools. But it can be adapted to many other aspects of life and society: different types of education (artistic, social... sexual), family, politics, associations, sports, etc.

This holistic system also adapts well to the action of the Church which, as we know, is essentially synodal. From 1995 to 2000 the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, in all its 4 countries (Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus) and in all its major components (Latin, Maronite, Melkite, Syrian Catholic, Armenian and Chaldean communities) organised a General Pastoral Synod. The Synod logo was TOGETHER, also based on the contribution of the global vision of our dear Jacqueline Sfeir.

When Pope Francis proposed on 15 October 2020 at the Pontifical Lateran University, the "**Global Educational Pact**", or "the Educational Village", to better put into practice the

encyclical "Laudato si", the document "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" and the "Fratelli Tutti", some teachers of our schools, spontaneously and with a little humor, said: "It looks like the educational system of our Jacqueline! How much she would have liked to be here with us now". Unfortunately, we lost Jacqueline Sfeir seven years ago, but her "**holistic educational system**" is still alive.

I remember that on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, when the Holy Father launched his proposal for the Global Educational Pact, the new Patriarch of Jerusalem was invited to make an intervention online, "Jerusalem, place of the soul. A mother who educates and helps people grow". The theme is not directly related to ours, but it has some very interesting ideas that are close to the "holistic educational system".

*Jerusalem 26/11/2020*

PS: - Illustrative diagram of the harmony of the autonomous and concentric circles of the  
**"Holistic Educational System"**

-If someone in Italy is interested in the Holistic Educational System, a good reference could be a Palestinian, my former student (then!), who now lives in Italy:

Prof. Sami Basha,

President of the American University of Sicily - AUS.

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