

**Transformative teaching in**

**Don Lorenzo Milani**

**and**

**Dun Ġorġ Preca**

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# **Abstract**

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Throughout the ages education has been perceived as a tool which caters for the lack of knowledge and culture of people. Many sought out to expand education for every one, faithful in the value of equality. This positive aspect was crucial but was not spared from unexpected oppressing consequences. The educational situation became an issue as these oppressing consequences and positive values of education were unequally distributed between different classes (strata) of people. The poor and weak having most of the oppressing consequences. Great educators were those people who managed to cater for this imbalance in education by exulting those considered weak, poor, peasant, shy and demanding to their rightful place. Focusing on how to remould the idealised educational model to their needs. Dun Ġorġ Preca and Don Lorenzo Milani were two of these great educators who sought out to remould the educational model and bringing a balance of knowledge, culture and learning attitudes within the imbalance of economic and social classes. Within their correlation they promoted continuous and relevant education; the importance of communicating clearly and effectively; the need to serve and a flattening out of all senses of superiority.

B.Ed. (Hons.)

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**Ġorġ Preca, Lorenzo Milani, Knowledge,  
Culture, Poor**

# **Author's Declaration**

I, the undersigned, ANDREW CASSAR, do declare that I am the author of this dissertation on:

**Transformative teaching in**

**Don Lorenzo Milani**

**and**

**Dun Ġorġ Preca**

Being presented in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor in Education (Honours) at the University of Malta. I do further confirm that this dissertation is an original and unpublished work.

April 2016

ANDREW CASSAR

## Dedication

To all those teachers who  
cherish their students and keep  
their students' future before  
theirs.

# Acknowledgements

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# **Chapter 1: My Personal** **Educational Experience**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The journey of every person is indicative to his/her background and roots. It is very difficult to change or transform the roots from which one may come. Nowadays, society as a whole considers itself as having made a leap forward because the low social class families are decreasing and education is free for everyone.

This situation may seem to be at its best, yet the tendency to maintain the roots have changed their appearance. It is therefore a different transformation which Ġorġ Preca and Lorenzo Milani will be proposing.

In sharing my personal educational experience and the encounter with these two educators, I will be a sign of this rather different transmissive educational experience.

## **1.2 Family**

I have been raised in what can be called a middle class family, having both parents initiate their work experience straight after finishing their secondary education; my father as a mason, my mother as a factory worker. Having three older siblings who before me went through the educational system gave me the opportunity - or the disadvantage - of having a pathway which encouraged my decisions. In fact, it can be said that the oldest of my siblings opened the narrow doors of tertiary education to our family while my second oldest sibling was a reminder of the choice to terminate my systematic educational experience after secondary schooling.

## **1.3 School**

Primary education had its crucial effects on my expectations of the educational system. Throughout my first six years experience I was unable to keep up with the work given and frequently ignored the small support coming

from my family. This resulted in deeming myself a failure and enrolling in an Area Secondary school as a fragile and shy student.

It wasn't the home work which kept my experience mediocre; this I proved later on when I managed to carry on successfully in my educational experience. The real oppressor was emotion. The feeling of being excluded from the rest of the class at school – to be the class' scapegoat whenever something went wrong.

At the start of the Area Secondary School I believed I was improving but by time I realised that the educational material provided was below the chronological age level, no wonder I was feeling wiser! I must admit that my path was leading me to the inevitable choice of leaving education forever. But with my eldest sister's assistance, through support and feedback, I had the chance to see that what I was discovering was knowledge that made sense to my life. In one way, I can say she brought education to life, and that encouraged me to embrace it. I passed on to a Junior Lyceum school after one year.

### *1.3.1 Teachers*

In my Junior Lyceum years I started to notice the teachers` attitudes towards education and students. When frequently asked what I aspired to be in the future, while still uncertain, I kept in mind Graphical Communication as a subject because the teacher was not only inspiring but helpful in mastering the topic. In a way, this teacher was able to create a balance between knowledge and student relation. When referring to student relation I mean a sound relationship with boundaries. In fact the teacher was rather strict with our class when compared to other subject teachers. His relation was different because it offered:

- Space for dialogue: lessons were not a one man show – there was space for students to intervene and discuss.

- Availability when in need: on the contrary to other teachers who spent their break in the staff room he was always in class waiting for anyone having questions.
- Gave real examples: Provided situations where the knowledge learned could be implemented.
- Encouraged continuous learning: through the recess one could remain in his class working and eating. He always had material prepared for anyone who wanted to go further.

No wonder that I had no doubts on whether to choose or not Graphical Communication. He was my stimulation and my aim.

## **1.4 M.U.S.E.U.M.**

Museum is a centre whose intention is to form the Christian in faith and attitudes of the gospel. It was founded by a Maltese priest, Fr. Preca, who will be analysed in this thesis, and it offers a different formation from the catechism centres common in Christian communities. In one way, this dissertation will be an opportunity to better understand my experience back within this community at the age of thirteen and share the benefits with the rest.

Like every other boy I had been attending since the age of five but stopped at the age of eleven after receiving my confirmation. It was on my return to the centre, at the age of thirteen that I really started to appreciate its work and aims. Indeed, before rejoining the society one could state that I was socially ignorant and lacking in inter and intrapersonal skills. My past experiences moulded me into a shy teenager, oppressing my character, and this threatened my educational experience.

The community reinstated the faith in myself, helped me relate with others in a healthy way and taught me to stand up for one's own beliefs. This was achieved through the continuous formation of the mind, conscience and spirit. Such notions were engraved in me all through the salient discussions about life related topics like education, religious freedom, human rights,

egoism, care, loneliness, social justice, work, property and more. Whilst we continued forming through interactive activities, outings in recreational and historical places, prayer sessions, confessions and missionary experience<sup>1</sup> amongst the many.

#### *1.4.1 A social life instead of TV*

Museum of which I am now part of, was a relevant divergence from what I consider to be one of the greatest burdens to the thinking mind, the Television - with all its idealistic and unrealistic subliminal messages about life and one's self-image. It was within Museum that I became conscious of an outside world which has much more to offer. The TV , did not give me time to relate with what was coming up on its screen. It did not let me reflect on the knowledge - whether it is all true is another question - presented. The worst consequence was that of becoming dependent to it - to be the first thing to switch on as soon as I arrive home. The museum community taught me to value more what every person around me had to say, and realise that most of what can be considered tangible knowledge is around me rather than on a screen, even though it did still value its importance as a means but not as an end.

#### *1.4.2 Supporting a learning attitude*

Alternatively, I started to have more time for myself and relate with what I already had around me. It can be said that I started to engage and like learning as a process per se. I started to question events and doings. Sought to learn new things. It became a characteristic in me to seek, to do, to listen to what really matters rather than lazing around watching TV, or simply wasting time playing computer games during lectures. Even if something may seem irrelevant, something within me still manages to extrude a

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of a five year formation course, candidates (usually aged 21) get to experience the work of the society in one of the foreign countries in which the society is in.

learning experience out of it and therefore keep my attention focused. This is something which I surely owe to the environment of these museum centres.

## **1.5 The B.ed. Course.**

My past Graphical Communication teacher in secondary school had his influence in my path and I kept studying the subject up to Tertiary level. The environment at University has been a harsh reality imposing a sense of insignificance through the course and igniting a longing to resign without even considering what is being taught. I felt that for the majority of our study group - Vygotsky, Piaget, Freud, Dewey, Plato, Rousseau and the rest were never considered as having any idea of reality. However, since I longed to try to understand students in order to help them, I was fascinated with all these theories, and aspired to see them in action, Vygotsky being my favourite, considering my influence coming from a community.

### *1.5.1 Milani*

The first contact with Don Lorenzo Milani occurred during the second semester of my second year. The professor introducing him showed such enthusiasm and determination in showing us that this person was different in the way he related to education, that I felt the need to read and see for myself what he offered. The *Letter to a teacher* (Borg, Cardona, Caruana, 2009) started it all. From there onwards I sought out to know more and listened to a documentary on YouTube called *La storia siamo noi. Esperienze Pastorali* (Milani, 1958) was next, so I bought it in Italian. It is quite interesting how he managed to write so much and yet keep his revival spirit within each work. *Lettere di Don Milani* (Gesualdi, 2007) was also an interesting insight into the thoughts and actions of this genius.

Throughout his work Milani is still an inspiration, not in a way which exalts him to the point of irrelevance but to an ironic reality through the way his bombastic simplicity gave a transforming power to every action done, to

every simple word. In this sense, he is a voice which reminds me that true knowledge is not found in Universities and complex formulas but in the simplicity of everyday life events. That, in order to discover true knowledge one must change the way he views the world and every word (Batini, Mayo, Surian, 2014) around him and for one to fully embrace true knowledge, one must be at the service of others (Borg, Cardona, Caruana, 2009).

### *1.5.2 Teaching practices*

I have included the teaching practice experience as part of my educational experience because it is an eye opener not only for those who seem reluctant to take the teaching vocation seriously but also for those who seem too enthusiastic about the teaching vocation. The world is complex and can never be completely grasped in theories and philosophies.

I was one of those enthusiastic student teachers when I first entered TP during my second year. Yet, the hardship of teaching Graphical Communication to students who were difficult to control and relate to, shook my thinking.

After the first impact of Teaching Practice I was prepared to face the same situation in my third year. Yet the second experience proved to be quite satisfying because a true relation was built. I felt that the Museum experience was at its best.

The fourth year experience brought the two back together. A good relation with students was built but exterior obstacles were also noticed. These influenced negatively the learning attitude of the students and therefore the whole idea about education. School administration and the subject teacher were unconsciously creating an environment which made it difficult for me to work in. Amongst the obstacles I encountered, were the suggestions made to low achievers to choose subjects like Graphical Communication because these were conceived to require small amounts of cognitive effort. Reluctance to adapt to new methods while teaching Graphical

Communication was also unbelievable. It had been said that new methods were only making the students less tough. Obstacles like these emanated from the school itself to segregate the motivated from the unmotivated and leave the latter in their own misery.

Teaching Practice was therefore not only an eye opener in the common sense of "stop living in theories... the school is a different reality and you have to adapt to it!" For me it was more likely to be an eye opener to the very same realities which Milani and Preca were talking about. It is a statement which goes like this: "Look around you! What was being criticised and revealed is true! Therefore you must work hard so as not to fall for the same mistakes which many have fallen into till this very day!"

## **1.6 On the edge of a Struggle**

Now that I am in my final year and on the edge of starting my vocation as a teacher, I am continuously reminded of what was written in the *Letter to a Teacher (=The letter)* – "Those who are not criticised age badly. They estrange themselves from history that lives and progresses. They become those poor creatures that you are." (Borg, Cardona, Caruana, 2009, p.49). The struggle of this vocation is to be true to oneself while acknowledging that there is no end to true knowledge and that there is no single holder of knowledge. Hence I should be ready to learn from everyone. In the end the true teacher's fulfilment should not be the financial position, or the fame through which one is looked at, but the belief that with what one does one serves, heals (Milani, 1967) and supports the weak to know and to live rather than exist.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter a short review of the researcher's educational experience and his encounter with the main characters has been briefed. These educational



experiences indicate the main events which made the researcher reflect upon and form his teaching and learning philosophy.

**Chapter 2: Context,**  
**bibliographic and educational**  
**engagement of Dun Gorg**  
**Preca.**

## **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the character of Dun Ġorġ Preca will be documented in the educative aspect while still cherishing his personality as a priest. His childhood, adulthood, priesthood and "founder" hood along with his deeds and choices were intrigued with his main act of mercy, teaching.

## **2.2 Family Back ground**

Saint Ġorġ Preca, still known as Dun Ġorġ Preca by the vast majority of Maltese citizens, was a Catholic priest born in the capital City of Valletta in 1880.

Born to a family whom was well maintained and educated, his father Vincent was a merchant and his mother Natalina worked as a teacher. Holding a good esteem (Bonniċi, 1970), Ġorġ along with his nine other siblings lived at ease even when their family had to move to the suburb town of Attard and eventually Ħamrun.

## **2.3 Education**

After his years in the primary school Preca, aged twelve, had the privileged opportunity to sit for the "Liceo" exams paid by his father, yet unexpectedly failed to pass along with other 194 students out of the 225 students who sat for the exams (Bonniċi, 1970). Here one has to mention that only 35% of the school aged children were being given the opportunity for an education at the beginning of the new century (Sultana , 2010), reflecting the poor educational situation which Malta was settled in.

Having passed the exams during the second trial (Bonniċi, 1970) of the same year, the young Preca entered the "Liceo" and continued in his studies, having a successful experience in languages - Latin, Italian, English, and French - and calligraphy (Bonniċi, 1970) . This is also reflected in particular episodes of his life amongst which are the times when he would practice his

Italian learnt at school with a common Italian carpenter living in Hamrun or the times when he would travel to the grand harbour waterfront and try to open discussions on the Catholic faith with foreign sailors passing by (Bonnici, 1970).

## **2.4 The Cause behind the choice**

When one looks at Preca's life, one can conclude rapidly that the main cause of his choices and way of life was based on his faith. Knowing that the Christian faith's founder, Jesus of Nazareth, spent his public life supporting the weak of his society with teachings and works of mercy, Preca decided to keep him as his model. Contrary to other priests who looked at Jesus as the giver, the one who forwards or acts on behalf of the needy, Preca saw him as the one who sided with the needy. Therefore, Preca saw Jesus not just as defending the poor by keeping a position of power but by stripping his self from all honours. This gave indications for Preca to be with the weak by embracing their world. Language, which was one of the issues of the time, due to the different powers battling for their side -Italian or English- was an opportunity for him to manifest this way of being with the weak. The way in which the Christian had to love the weak, Preca emphasised, was by giving strength to them and their voice which would be frequently silenced. Therefore faith and teaching of the people are intertwined for Preca.

### *2.4.1 Democratisation of Faith*

"Being totally against that priestly faith, which was superficial and superstitious in its essence", he worked for the "democratisation of the Christian faith" (Bonnici, 1970, p.97) that is, having a well informed, formed, reasoned and lived faith. Or else when one would face difficulties or even the possibility to denounce his faith, he would denounce it. One's faith had to be part of one's being.

## 2.5 His means

### 2.5.1 *The society*

To start with, he made it a point to found a religious society, made out of lay people, which while under the guidance of the Church -the hierarchy- was to form its own path, one dedicated to teaching and living the faith.

The Society of Christian Doctrine, better known as M.U.S.E.U.M. is surrounded and surrounds the notion of learning. The lay people making part of the society -a trade mark of his -, whom would be workers at the dockyard but illiterate both in faith and life, were literally bombarded with teachings and lessons, topic discussions and seminars about every aspect of life from the lens of faith. This was done to create a pathway for its members to become masters in the teachings of faith while still being "part of the world", in contrast to the religious orders whom the majority would not have any particular experience of work and labour for the sake of living.

This would be the best environment for the members in order to share their knowledge of life and faith with others especially children. Preca also managed the formation of his society by requesting that the members must follow a "Rule"<sup>2</sup> or a way of life. From this rule, the members are expected to live a life based on humility and meekness. The former, to avoid any attempts of carrier in their work with the children, while reflects also the belief that everyone has something from which the whole community can benefit. The latter, promoted sweetness and Christian love; believing that "a teaspoon of honey attracts more flies than a bucket of vinegar"<sup>3</sup>. These and other requirements or attitudes which will be referred to further on, reflect that Preca built up the necessary scaffolding for a community of care to embrace the notion of lifelong learning. Like a family, providing the adequate

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<sup>2</sup> A book which holds the lifestyle of the members, based on the same idea of religious orders' rule mainly St. Benedict's

<sup>3</sup> Maltese proverb meaning : One attracts more with sweetness rather than arrogance.

environment for the word of the "God of Peace"<sup>4</sup> to be lived seven days a week.

### *2.5.2 Teaching skills*

The teaching skills or rather the way knowledge could be eased were also tackled by Preca through his society. All those aspiring to become members were trained in the skill of relating the audience's experience to the topic being discussed. Making the same topic relevant and reasonable to an audience composed of an illiterate majority. This brings insights to Wittgenstein's philosophy on communication, in which it is understood that communication is a process of exchanging pictures. The more likely to pass on knowledge using pictures with which the receiving end is familiar with, the more comprehensible the teaching /learning is.

Part of the skill to make learning much more enjoyable and interesting was in the audience with whom Preca wanted his members to deal with, that is children. One could view the choice as occasional because Malta lacked professional catechism classes for children and also an easy way of doing things since the relating end is immature. In reality Preca believed that the skill consisted in fragmenting difficult, abstract concepts for a slow learning audience. This would open more pathways in discussing same complex ideas with adult audiences whom would still prefer to have knowledge broken down into more digestible pieces. One must remember that one of the greatest hurdles for the learning process is the view of a giant obstacle which seems difficult to understand.

There can be no profit if there is no understanding, if one does not understand the teaching. What is the value of knowing a sentence by heart if one does not understand it?...but when they listen to, and understand the explanation and its splendour, then they appreciate them and put them into practice (Preca, 1950, p. 65-66) .

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<sup>4</sup> From "The Major Union". A prayer written by Preca and which is recited once a month by the members of the society in order to honour unity in God.

The idea of being fully alive, that is, holistically, was also emphasised by Preca in his teaching method. Learning is not a domain for the cognitive process alone. The full person should be engaged in the learning process, and so the physical body plays a part in lifelong learning (Sultana, 2007). "A healthy soul requires a healthy body." Preca used to say. Therefore he requested that his members spend an afternoon once in a week, walking or playing with the children whom they relate to. It was also a way how to socialise informally with the children ( Randich, 2013). Creating bonds which support the continuous, affection and educational approach.

## 2.6 Other Resources to help

Another important factor which Preca made use of in the attempt to reduce illiteracy in life and faith was by using the communication media of his time; the printing press. Writing was part of Preca's life and schedule. Not only did he write more than a hundred of books and booklets<sup>5</sup>, but most importantly, wrote them in Maltese. He truly knew that the majority of people especially the poor spoke in Maltese. This shows both his conviction and his urge to communicate with the illiterate (Friggieri, 2001).

All these booklets written by Preca, were also means from which his own Society could learn and teach, knowing that even his Society was one made of lay workers who worked in the dockyard. The members had the opportunity to view more booklets and resources, in the time where these were scarce. Sultana C. (2007) gives us this list:

Amongst Fr.George Preca's repertoire we find

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<sup>5</sup> Natalino Camilleri has the latest version of Preca's bibliography composed of 119 books and pamphlets, 145 leaflets and handbills, 131 articles published in periodicals or newspapers and 15 unpublished works. (Cfr. Natalino CAMILLERI, *Metaphors of Christian Life in the Writings of Dun Ġorġ*, 1997, p.95-117). From Sultana C. M. (2007), *The Presence and the use of the Bible in the ministry and in the works of Dun Ġorġ Preca*.

1. works based on prayers of a para-liturgical nature;
2. treatises dealing with a particular argument in a complex and complete way;
3. works aimed at augmenting the spirituality of the members;
4. works aimed at explaining the teaching given by the Society and the method  
which was to be used;
5. works in the form of meditations;
6. works which elaborate upon the fundamental teachings of the Church;
7. works aimed at those who already had a good theological background;
8. works written in the form of separate lessons for the assenjatur<sup>6</sup> (Sultana, 2007, p.99-100).

### *2.6.1 A Guide to those who teach children*

One of the booklets written by Preca, and which was restricted within the Society is, *A Guide to those who teach Children* (1934). It can be said that this booklet has what we can call pedagogical tips, for those who teach children and youths, and it is one of a kind. One must keep in mind that a booklet like this in those times, can be said to be historical, since the idea of pedagogy developed in the late 50's.

The booklet having thirty (short) chapters can be divided into two main sections. In the first section it can be said to discuss education itself, as in pedagogy. In the second section one finds chapters which acknowledge the

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<sup>6</sup> Fr. Preca had the idea to organise this notion of having an hour of learning between the members after the catechises of children is finished. Various topics are discussed and it is done between members.



importance and the need of Education. The latter part can be considered as a motivational text, focusing on different reasons why one should persevere in their vocation of teaching.

One can organise the contents of this book by dividing it into sections and divisions:

- **Education Itself**
  - Teaching Style
  - Learning/ Teaching Places
  - Discipline
  - Knowing the Children and their attitudes
  - False Conscience.
  
- **Acknowledging Education**
  - Importance for State and Church
  - Motivations
  - Sacrifice
  - Universal Teaching
  - Scandal
  - Good Example

**Education itself:**

*Teaching style:* According to Preca, one's lesson should be divided into two sections. The first is an explanation/teaching using short, simple and direct words followed by concrete examples if necessary using visuals for learning with ease. The second part involves the students who are continuously

questioned. Repetition for Preca had a crucial role in teaching. He also mentions the use of the senses.

*Learning/teaching places:* For Preca, "if the children are not to be bored that easily, they need to be placed in an area open to air, light, and tidiness" (Preca, 1934, p.26 ). Yet again, every place should be considered as a learning place, including outside, shops, playfields and others. Interestingly enough, the importance of visual aids is also mentioned at that time.

*Discipline:* Surveillance must be kept hand in hand with discipline because according to Preca "children like to do what they should not do, when they are unsurveilled" (Preca, 1934, p.8 ). Discipline not as a means itself but as a correction method for the benefit of the child. Therefore he considers the need to use love and kindness, adaptation of discipline according to the child's character, never sending someone out of class, -something which is very rare to hear, in those times- and never giving up on those who seem stubborn. He ends his suggestions reminding of the possibility to use sweetness and good words for those hurt from discipline.

*Knowing children and their attitudes:* Preca acknowledges the variety in children's character and attitudes or "temperaments" .This conclusion of his conduces him to encourage teachers to first study their class of students so as to get to know them. And therefore one can provide the right attitude and relation with every child, just like a doctor, using the right medicine for the right patient. This reflects Hollins (2011) theory and assumptions for quality teaching.

*Attitudes in teaching:* Section VI presents interesting points or rather attitudes in catechists and teachers, these include: an attitude of learning or rather loving the process of self learning (in order to pass on the love of learning to others); an attitude of searching, in order to explain and give meaning to what is being taught; a calm attitude, a lot of patience is needed with children; attractive sweetness, to attract children; humility is also important in order to lower oneself to the children's level and excuse

children's certain actions which might occur unconsciously of their damage; last but not least, an attitude of purity in heart and eyes. Preca was aware of the scandals that could be given by those working with children.

*False Conscience:* A theme which I felt the need to include in the list of "education itself" is the theme of False Conscience or perception. The teachers are encouraged to avoid exaggerations in children's mistakes because these can create false perceptions in children who would fear that they made a big mistake, when in reality it would be minimal.

### **Acknowledging Education**

*Importance of education for both State and Church:* Educating children and giving them good examples provided that good catechists/teachers offer their teachings with a spirit of love. This also avoids the damage which whatever sin or evil/ uneducated deeds bring upon society as a whole.

*Motivations:* Amongst the motivations mentioned by Preca, he considers the future of the students, what they might achieve and one's own memory of good teachers without whom the present teachers could not have arrived till this point. Another motivation in the eyes of Preca are the benefits of those who teach children. the benefit of staying and socialising with children indulges the teacher to become like one of them, humble and simple. While also involving oneself in one of the greatest acts of charity.

*Sacrifice:* Preca acknowledges the great sacrifices that teachers and catechists put themselves in. The patience of those who teach. The exhausting but necessary attitude of continuous caring for children. Like a gardener, he explains, formation is a continuous process even during informal times. A healthy relationship with children is exhausting.

*Universal Teaching:* At the first glimpse of this title, one might expect a contrast from what Milani believed to be impossible. Yet, Preca specifies his notion of universal teaching. For him, learning and teaching was open for all children, and those who refuse or rather, make an exception on the children

whom to teach in their vocation " should be rebuked" (Preca, 1934, p.13 ) . All the children are considered equal in their right for education. Their social class, the place where they live and character must not be a cause for discrimination.

*Scandal:* Preca makes also note of something which one may think was not so frequent in those days. On the contrary, he gives specific indications on how scandal could be given, indicating that scandals were not incidents in those times either. He gives a severe warning to those who teach or have contact with children.

*Good example:* Believing that the more simple and direct one can be, the better it is for teaching effectively, Preca instructs teachers to first act and then teach. Therefore, their teachings should be preceded by example amongst which he mentions clothing, and balanced wording, that is, precautions in which words to use.

## **2.7 Conclusion:**

This chapter has looked through the life and deeds of Dun Ġorġ Preca in order to extract his philosophy and aims in education. It will also be of use to better understand the relation which Preca has in common with Milani. Some of his main outcomes include the reserved place for the child, the use of all means in order to serve the least, language playing a key role, building communities which hold learning as maxima and education as a means for a responsible faith.

**Chapter 3: Context,**  
**bibliographic and educational**  
**engagement of Don Lorenzo**  
**Milani.**

### **3.1 Introduction:**

The character of Don Lorenzo Milani will be presented in a brief yet accurate account in order to draw our attention on his main stand-ups in favour of the poor and most needy whom in his case were the children who were dumped for the educational system due to their fall back. In this way he points out to the main reasons for their exclusion and in the process brings to light other aspects of schools and teaching to a new light encouraging everyone to rethink history and the whole world.

### **3.2 Family, Educational Background and Conversion**

Don Lorenzo Milani was born to a family in Florence which carried the cultural inheritance of philosophers, educational pioneer's collaborators, archaeologists, cultural capital owners, and psychoanalysis star students (Borg, Cardona and Caruana, 2009). His father Albano a chemistry professor and his mother Alice, a Jewish by descendants, had two other siblings after him, Elena and Adriano. One therefore, can easily imagine that his upbringing was privileged and kept its social class even when economic trouble hit Italy in the 1930's. By this time, the Milani Family had moved to Milan.

While in Milan, for the first time, Lorenzo encountered the educational system, -elementary school; as a tool in the hands of the rich and powerful (Fascist ideology), solidifying their position with knowledge while rejecting to support the needy, the illiterate.

Meanwhile when he was ten years old (1933), Albano and Alice, decided to remarry within the Catholic Church, fearing the rise to power of Hitler in Germany and to avoid any other uncomfortable experiences with Catholics<sup>7</sup>.

Finishing his compulsory studies in 1941, he decided to study art against his parent's wishes, and was mentored by Hans Joachim Staude. During this period, while studying sacred art, Lorenzo has what many call his "spiritual experience" and his real conversion to Catholicism. In fact, few months after receiving his Confirmation in 1943, Lorenzo enters the Seminary and is ordained a priest in 1947 aged 24. He immediately dedicates his life to the poor and the forgotten, trying to give them a voice using his intellectual capacities, defending them using his intransigence and arrogance of his bourgeois upbringing (Borg, Cardona and Caruana, 2009), while being nourished from their experiences of life and describing them as being his inspiration.

Everything that I know has been given to me from the young workers and farmers whom I've taught. What they thought they were learning from me, was actually what I was learning from them. I taught them only how to express themselves while they taught me how to live. They were the ones to encourage me to think what I've written in this book. I didn't find them in the school books. I learnt them while writing and I wrote them because they had put them in my heart (Milani, 1957, p.235).

### **3.3 San Donato di Calenzano**

Don Lorenzo Milani arrived at San Donato di Calenzano in 1947 and remained there for seven years<sup>8</sup>. Calenzano is a municipality in the province

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<sup>7</sup> Adriano, Lorenzo's Brother had been bullied in his Catholic Private school for being a "heretic", having Jewish descendants. From Borg C., Cardona M. and Caruana S. (2009) *Letter to a Teacher*.

<sup>8</sup> From <http://www.donlorenzomilani.it/> Retrieved in Dec. 2015

of Florence of the Tuscany region<sup>9</sup>. In that time, it was populated by farmers and textile workers (Borg, Cardona and Caruana, 2009), and as seen in Milani's book Entitled *Esperienze Pastorali* (1958), the parishioners' faith was mainly folkloristic, influenced their economy and lacked coherency.

### 3.3.1 Observations

He notes that religious feasts are popular in his parish and that people celebrate them with great solemnities but, it is unlikely for them to know what they are truly celebrating. This is demonstrated in the same way they celebrate civil feasts - whether they are for the king, or for a German dictator. He questions, "people having this festive fever, should have at least passed on the minimum of something religious in today's generation". Yet, "nothing is seen from this religious diffusion. On the contrary, numbers seems to have decreased." (Milani, 1957, p.80)

Therefore, all those methods used by previous priests (The Azione Cattolica included), were only creating an outer environment of faith which in reality was building nothing but incoherent support, deteriorating by time. "How can we expect any twist in attitudes, if not by starting to build those intellectual foundations which alone, can grant an interior coherency and stability in this coherency." (Milani, 1957, p.73)

These few paragraphs from his book give an indication that his pastoral work, was to take a different turn, contrary to the common work of the parish priest. In fact, he would go out to the squares, working places and recreational places to analyse and work out the reason behind the shallow faith of the people. His findings helped him decide to dedicate his life as not only a good pastor but also as a teacher.

His educational project included:

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<sup>9</sup> From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calenzano> Retrieved in Dec. 2015



- Evening classes for youth workers.
- Friday Conferences discussing various issues with speakers knowledgeable in the subject.
- And Drama sessions in order to help self-expression.

All these initiatives were directed in order to overcome the linguistic barrier (Borg, Cardona and Caruana, 2009) prevalent in that time, knowing that "language is the ghostly key that opens every door" (Borg, Cardona and Caruana, 2009, p.6) and which was being ignored by the Religious leaders who believed it to be the cause of communism (Milani, 1957, p. 118). To do so, he kept the students at the centre of a process, *scuola popolare*, which while rejected completely the idea of recreation, involved research and writing in order to understand better society and help it change and transform.

### **3.4 Barbiana**

His mission in San Donato had to end on December of 1954, with a transfer to a remote parish on the hill region of Mugello named Barbiana habituated by approximately 20 farmhouses. There he lacked water supply, electricity and access road. Work for the industries would require everyday waking up at 5am and by 8.30pm the workers would be at home. The farmers of the village worked in poor conditions also. The children were required to go to school up until the law demanded and as soon as they would finish school, as "failures", semi-literate, timid and with a low self-esteem (Borg, Cardona and Caruana, 2009) the family would leave Barbiana in order to live "better" by settling in the cities.

#### ***3.4.1 The Educational Project***

His educational project at Barbiana consisted of the same principles as in San Donato, with the exception of forbidding leisure from the start, while having a milder attitude towards "leisure" which he considered as necessary

like swimming and skiing. In fact, the educational project was a Private school for children aged 11-18, 12 hours-a-day seven days a week. The school was free of charge while not benefiting from the government's funds. It was a school which offered the possibility for children to go beyond the "quinta elementare", and therefore further their years in learning and teaching while postponing their permanent working age (the students had the chance to experience work in foreign countries during the summer(Borg, Cardona and Caruana, 2009).

At first Milani himself tutored the classes, but as the numbers grew, he started to encourage his own elder students (15-18 years old) to teach different classes; bringing forth the attitude of teacher-student position in his students, since everyone has something to teach to others.

### **3.5 Letter to a Teacher:**

His educational project became a more known phenomenon as Don Milani invited many different speakers from different professions, just like at San Donato. Yet, his publicity reached the top, as his school wrote "A Letter to a Teacher" (1967) after experiencing the failure of three of his students who were trying to get the "Licenzia" as teachers. The "letter" is their most famous work also because it was used as a manifest in the '68 revolt of students. For us, as educators, it offers a clear indication of his inclinations in education, and therefore various points coming out of it will be noted as his contribution towards education.

#### *1. The crucial role of the weak in school<sup>10</sup>:*

Milani considered the weak or those finding difficulty at learning in school as the reason for school, because without them school does not make sense. Therefore schools' existence, being a community of care<sup>11</sup> against the

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<sup>10</sup> Borg, C., Cardona, M., Caruana, S., (2009) *Letter to a Teacher* pg 176-7

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pg 37

individualistic society, must be homes supporting the least. Fighting against the popular orientation of personal achievement -seen in every inclination towards learning for carriers<sup>12</sup>- and the "failing-mania"<sup>13</sup> present in various teachers who instead of helping students offer obstacles<sup>14</sup>.

## *2. How to write:*

The letter itself is a manifest of this belief. Instead of holding the idea of using elaborate words in order to impress and give the impression of knowledge while in reality being unrealistic in the way how to communicate, it is suggested to use simple and direct words. Concise and clear<sup>15</sup> messages, having subheadings before each paragraph in order to direct one's thought. Knowing also that behind the idea of writing, one should always keep in mind the aim of serving the people, the community and therefore bring change<sup>16</sup>.

## *3. Communicating the acquired knowledge:*

To communicate the truth, there needs to be good communication. This points out to the need to learn as much languages as possible since they are the means through which truth is transmitted. "Language is formed by words from every subject, so it is necessary to touch on all the subjects, a bit superficially, in order to enrich one's speech. "To become amateurs in everything and specialists only in the art of talking."<sup>17</sup> Amongst the methods used to learn languages Milani made use of tape recordings<sup>18</sup> and first hand work experiences in foreign countries, in order to give a practical meaning to the language being learned.

## *4. The injustice of equality:*

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pg 47-8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pg 44

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pg 73

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. pg44

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pg 183

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pg 109

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pg 45-6

It is unjust, according to the authors to have a school which provides subjects and themes which are relevant to the everyday lives of those who are more into a cultural richness. This way brings to a disadvantage those who do not have the same background, those who are poor in the culture of the rich. The solution is to be found in what to teach, that is, realistic experiences related to subjects, in how to attract attention and induce a desire to learn within<sup>19</sup> and in the way how school is managed, having no limit of learning time per day. These were not just suggestions but real facts which Don Milani along with his students managed to implement in his school. In fact, it was a rule of theirs to wait for each student to comprehend the lessons being taught and until then, do not proceed<sup>20</sup>.

#### *5. Passivity:*

Don Milani is also against the old attitude of passivity or acceptance of the current situation. He argues that even the unwilling (of the rich) are capable of learning<sup>21</sup>. Turning towards teachers, he denounces the attitude of comfort, ignoring the signs of time showing the need to change in the way how they relate to those who find it difficult to cope with the system<sup>22</sup>.

#### *6. Against the popular culture (fashion):*

The damages of the popular culture (fashion) amongst which are the attitude of hatred towards school, recreation and television are revealed to be demolishing the illiterate and increasing the separation between the rich literate and the poor illiterate. He points out that literate ones have enough cultural background to be unaffected by fashion, while the illiterate -today these are those who give little importance to school- lose the little they have in order to waste their time. Just like one of his students at Barbiana:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pg 48

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. pg74

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. pg 85

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pg 55, 85

"in town he is influenced by all fashions except the right ones. Whoever does not follow them gets isolated. One would need the sort of courage that he, who is young, uneducated, not helped by anyone, cannot have. ...(All) are in competition in order to drag him down even more.

As if the urges we have inside us are not enough"<sup>23</sup>

### 7. Reforms<sup>24</sup>:

The following are the suggested reforms which came out after evaluating all these situations:

- Failure: Avoiding failure as a solution to school population control or as a way to keep up with a pace for final exams.
- Full-time schooling: Believing<sup>25</sup> that it can be helpful to those who need more time to engage in learning or have other difficulties. Also because at home they do not continue their formation in contrast to those who do, either through private lessons or family background.
- Provide a clear aim to learn: evoking the urge to understand more through relevance and the experience of knowing. While remembering that the goal of learning is the understanding of one another in order to serve one another<sup>26</sup>.
- Finding ways how to dedicate one's life to the sole purpose of education. Amongst the possibilities he suggests a celibate life.<sup>27</sup>

Believing that the greatness of one's life does not consist in where it is lived<sup>28</sup>, he wished to be buried at Barbiana's cemetery and so he was

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pg 83/4

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pg 97

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pg 100

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pg 109

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. pg 102

when he died of leukaemia in June 1967, one month after having published the "letter".

### **3.6 Conclusion:**

In this chapter we have seen the main aspects in Don Lorenzo Milani's life which were visible signs of how lack of effective education leads to oppression and boring process irrelevant to life. Another emphasis which came out was the role that communication, through spoken languages and writing, plays a key part in the process. Having analysed Milani in this thorough way, both Milani and Preca will be compared in order to emerge their beliefs with greater strength.

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<sup>28</sup> "La storia siamo noi" part 3 Don Lorenzo Milani. Retrieved on Dec. 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsllicGb-XI>

**Chapter 4: Dialectical analysis**  
**for a synthesis of the two**  
**personalities**

## **4.1 Introduction:**

This chapter will serve as a synthesis of the two biographies and lessons learned for an alternative, largely transformative paradigm in education. The context of time and venue will also be considered. The emergence of a common goal and purpose will also be clearly visible. That of serving the weak and emarginated.

## **4.2 Social-class and education:**

Money is one of the basis for a privileged culture which while acknowledges itself as the cause for social class, in reality it is based on causality, luck or more precisely corruption of power in order to keep it.

Milani has fought against this idea of social class not in order to make all the same or equal as in communist philosophy, but in order to give equal opportunities and dominance over one's life, to all. "Rather than bringing the gap of ignorance, we are interested in bringing the gap of difference" (Milani, 1957, p. 220). Because the privileged culture of the higher social class is one of the major causes which inhibit the true education of the poor and weak, Milani and Preca sought to counter that negligence by providing a culture of education to the ones who could never afford it through finance or parental support.

### *4.2.1 Continuous and relevant education:*

The two main methods used by the rich in order to dominate in the sector of education are:

- The limitation of interaction with knowledge or what is being taught/learned in school and;
- The irrelevance of the knowledge and work made in school.



Privileged children have the possibility to enhance their learning experience at home because they have the necessary support and finance to further their education. They do not bother with the deficiency of the education system in the irrelevant topics taught since they are taken care of by their parents and their culture at home. The 'Giannis'<sup>29</sup> cannot. They tend to be the ones who need to support their family in everyday life with its low income. The more they find that the little they learn in class is useless for this purpose, the more the educational system seems irrelevant to them and the more they are keen to abandon it.

Both Preca and Milani provided for a continuous education with respect to their aims. Preca opened his centres every day, in contrast to his counterparts who catered for catechesis once or twice per week. At the same level, Milani provided his famous school which offered 365 days of education per year. Both also offered the possibility to interact with knowledge and dig deeper into its meaning. Preca did so through the "assenjatur" which offered the possibility for the members to ask and discuss the issues and teachings raised in the hour following the catechesis of children, while Milani is renown to have spent hours on the same topic because his students would be urged to question and discuss what would be said by Milani.

Furthermore, both characters emphasised in teaching and learning relevant knowledge and made use of factual events in order to enrich the experience. Milani was known to have started his lesson through the discovery of a skeleton in a field and develop it into topics of Biology, Geography, Chemistry History and so on ( Batini, Mayo, Surian, 2014). Not to mention the use of events and doings from the children's own experiences and newspapers. Preca repeated this method as he made frequent reference to life events which would have passed across him in order to teach faith dogmas or attitudes. Not only did he use relevant stories and events, but he also used relevant language, the Maltese language, in order to make himself more understood and therefore relevant. Referring back to a point which

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<sup>29</sup> In the *Letter to a teacher* the figure of Gianni, represents the children of the workers and/or farmers.

came out of his manual on teaching Preca said that those who make exceptions of children in their teaching, due to social class or character "should be rebuked" (Preca, 1934, p.13 ).

### **4.3 Language and Power**

One of the main factors on which the social class gap effect relies on is language or the ability to communicate. The people who are less able to express their feelings and reactions to the world around them tend to be considered as incompetent and lacking in basic skills, providing enough power to the ones capable of communicating to exert control over their lives. The scene becomes worse when the illiterate choose to accept the situation and do not attempt to change their life. Visualising the step needed as difficult and unreachable, by concluding that "now it's too late"<sup>30</sup>.

It has already been said how Preca used the Maltese language to make the teaching experience more relevant to his members and pupils. Looking at a different angle to the same event reveals another aspect of his aim and belief. In the faith context of his time, Preca knew that the Bible and other spiritual writings of the time were prohibited from the majority of the people, the lay people. Therefore from one side, the foundations of faith was limited to what priests of the time taught and on the other hand the Church as an institution, was too preservative in keeping the teachings of faith to its hierarchy. Power was controlled and monitored. Writing verses from the Latin Bible in Maltese, the language of the people, along with providing teaching material regarding the living of faith, in Maltese by himself, were a sign that it was time to stop "oppressing" the faithful and providing them guidance in order to live their faith more responsibly. This does not mean that Preca saw the Church as an oppressor of the poor common people, even though others within the Church did think of him so. No, on the contrary he was more keen to see the lay people, the oppressed, more free to reason and believe in their received faith responsibly. In so doing, he was encouraging a faith to be lived

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<sup>30</sup> An elderly said when I encouraged him to start learning a PC.

rather than manifested in processions and faith events alone. Having knowledge which could be understood, meant one could live it more responsibly.

Milani, did also start his reasoning and liberation process from this same starting point of reasonable faith, as seen in his "esperienze pastorali"<sup>31</sup>, but he went a step further believing that before being a Christian, one is human, therefore before one could become a saint, one has to become human and not live a life like an animal ( Milani, 1957). His reasoning and engagement with students concerned life matters. Lawyers, politicians, journalists, doctors, magistrates and others were invited for discussions and deeper understanding of events found in local newspapers or in Historical events (Milani, 1957). The understanding of words through their etymology and their meaning in different contexts, in-depth lessons on Italian as the native language (Borg, Cardona, Caruana, 2009) which can be used to lead to other languages, practicing of foreign languages through tape recorders and work experiences in foreign countries such as France, England, Germany, and Tripoli, were other point in Milani's agenda.

#### **4.4 Teacher-student relation**

In the 20th century and also beforehand the relationship between teacher and students was revered as one of authority from the teacher, to the student. Teachers were the knowledge bearers and the students had to listen in order to receive some of the knowledge for them to fill their empty banks (Freire, 1970). If we look in the writings of both personalities we get to see that this mentality was still influential in educational institutions. Both Milani and Preca offered a different teacher position, one which had to reflect the belief that everybody has something to offer and that every knowledge is important for one to become a fully responsible person.

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<sup>31</sup> Esperienze Pastoralis 1958 pg 122

Milani emphasised that both teacher and student had to change positions or rather had to be in both positions simultaneously. This is reflected in his reverence to the abilities and skills his mountaineers had and which were considered as equally important as the knowledge learned in school if not even more, because it was much more essential for them. He believed to have learned a lot when considering the relation which he had with his students. Believing to be superior to his students was considered to be a factor which distanced him away from his students as they would therefore be considered inferior. In fact he was also contrary to the belief of having a methodology or a pedagogy implemented with his students. If so, then that was believed to be a sign of superiority, "the master, the father of a pedagogy" as if "he managed to do something by himself with his own ability". Instead, he wanted the teacher or the one who facilitates learning to be like an "Ignorant master" (Batini, Mayo, Surian, 2014, p. 83) one who considers himself to be on equal level with his students and therefore gives them the possibility to express themselves, to burst out their hidden knowledge which "God had purposely put in order to compensate for their social class" (Milani, 1957, p.242). Even the use of the collective writing pedagogy developed by Mario Lodi, was another way to demystify to role of the teacher as the mind behind learning. In fact Eduardo Martinelli explains:

In collective writing, there are no authors, not even the eight students are authors... Collective writing is a fruit of the educational process. It isn't either of the teacher nor the students'. It transcends the context because everyone gives out his best and the work is made as a team.<sup>32</sup>

If learning is to take the top position, than the teacher and not the students have to make a "class suicide" (Batini, Mayo, Surian, 2014, p.62). He has to give up his position of superiority with totality. To the state of saying that he is not there "for them" but he is there "with them". "To be" rather than "to have".(Milani, 1957, p.239).

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<sup>32</sup> From <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Duk8174-3BQ> "Don Lorenzo Milani Oggi"- 2 Retrieved Jan. 2016

Preca like Milani, does also conform to the attitudes which the teachers should have in order to be with their students rather than for the students. In "Gwida għal min jgħallem it-tfal" he mentions attitudes which bring the teacher or catechist in his case, closer to pupils. Attitudes of lifelong learning, humility, searching and patience.

This mentality was shared with his fellow members. He sought that the members learn from each other and question what would be taught in the "assenjatur". This provided the opportunity for learning which was at equal level, lay person to lay person. This attribution is also reflected in the choice of forming a society of lay people rather than priests. The latter were considered a privileged group of people who cherished much esteem in that time while, the former were considered the common people, the workers. This same fact of being workers, working for their own living -this is part of their vocational rule- and living a common life or rather, interacting with the world like the majority of the people, was to make their engagement with children more fruitful and direct, because the member was not in a privileged state or culture in comparison to the child, but a worker just like most of the children's parents. Humility was to form part of the two attitudinal pillars on which Preca wanted to found his society.

#### *4.4.1 Acknowledging Students' Knowledge:*

To reduce the gap between both protagonists of the learning process, a lot of importance was given to the knowledge of the child, knowledge which could not be found in libraries. Preca would make use of real live issues and events which the children themselves would have gone through or mentioned, showing that their knowledge was valuable because it taught realities not found in books. Their stories were important also to familiarise and understand new concepts and realities. His acceptance of the child being a knowledgeable being rather than vessels waiting to have knowledge deposited, moved him to present the child as a model in humility and interest of learning.

The same can be said about Milani, he gave enormous value to the knowledge his mountaineers knew equalising it with the knowledge the privileged culture considered as more important.

It is true that in books you will find a concentration of observations which we cannot obtain relying only on our own eyes. But in compensation in the big book of the woods and fields, there is concreteness of observations that one can never obtain from books(Borg, Cardona, Caruana, 2009, p.210-211).

Even the importance given to the current affairs in newspapers and the reactions to them illustrates this same belief in the value of the student's knowledge.

#### *4.4.2 Blaming the victim syndrome:*

"Blaming the victim" is called a syndrome because there are certain characteristics which diagnose it but without actually concretising it. The main symptom is an attitude of acceptance towards an obstacle. Concluding that it is natural or god designed. In our case the obstacle, a student who finds difficulty to keep up with his equal age class mates for different reasons, is rejected, or worse blamed.

In "the letter" a dialogue between a teacher and peasant parents is reproduced: "If things do not get on well, it is the child who is not cut out for studying" The Teacher said. "What a well-mannered person. He told me to sit down. He showed me the marks register. Some work full of blue marks. We were not blessed with an intelligent one. Patience. He will go to the fields just as we did"(Borg, Cardona, Caruana, 2009, p.55).

Milani indicates that any member of a school alike can be easily intrigued to do so. He proposed that when similar cases happen it is the "school" which is to be blamed. Being an institution following the surrounding culture its reaction is typical to egoistic individualism seeking to build one's own fortress of qualifications in order to be better than others. Therefore these students

who seem to need more help are rejected and blamed for not being in conformity with the rest.

Against this attitude, he sought out to have a community of learning in his school following the motto "I care" and structured his teaching and learning around his students especially those who found difficulty in understanding. He also removed any temptations for egoistic possessions like qualifications in his school.

Preca was likewise in favour of the most weak in school encouraging his members to "never give up on those who seemed stubborn" (Preca, 1934, p.9). He also emphasised that there must be discipline while using sweetness for an organised learning and not just gather the children of the street and provide them with "time wasting activities" and say: "we managed to keep these children out of street delinquency". He wanted to help the children by building responsible Christians and not just providing leisure.

#### **4.5 Powerful knowledge opposed to soft and Inconsequential knowledge:**

Both Milani and Preca felt the need to educate using knowledge which was powerful in itself because it had the potentiality to bring justice, threatening the power of the oppressors. In fact both personalities experienced opposition from the main authorities who were above them, mainly the Roman Catholic Church. In reality the Church as a religious institution feared more the threat to faith traditions rather than earthly power, but having temporal power in its hands and being composed of many bits and parts, one could easily imagine that rumours against the protagonists were also based on manipulation and commodity of some.

Milani was moved to the distant and so thought inconsequential parish of Barbiana after having manifested amongst many other factors, his intentions and reasons for not siding with the Christian Democrats in the election through his popular school at San Donato. Candidates who in reality could

not be considered as real Catholics were out of his list for votes, and the same was for the other socialists and communists candidates who rejected or twisted Truth. He did not consider the loss brought by such loyalty to Truth and encouraged his students to do the same. They did as Giordano exclaims

Anyways, I made friends with him because he made every part right and was against everyone and despised the news paper of the priests and the Unity's in the same way and taught us to think with our own heads (Milani, 1957, p.270).

The same can be said about Preca. The situation in Malta was critical. The local church had already opposed the English authority from interfering in the educational system fearing the opening of the doors of the faithful to Protestantism at the cost of their low level of education. Having someone like Preca offering theological knowledge to lay people and encouraging them to teach it to others was a clear sign of the same threat. This resulted in having his initial centres ordered to closed. Time proved in favour and he was given permission to reopen. Still he believed that true knowledge had to be handed to everyone in order to remove religious ignorance which manifested itself in the whole life of an individual.

Going into a deeper level of argumentation and analysis, it is clearly seen that rather than opposing the Church as the authority, both sought to fight against the handling of knowledge, keeping the power in the hands of the few, "in order to protect the others", while passing down what could be considered as inconsequential knowledge.

In fact Milani did not just oppose church authorities when these sought to sacrifice notions of justice at all costs against communism. He did also oppose the leaderships which educational systems managed in order to cater for the needs of the cultured who had enough of valuable knowledge "at home" and therefore provided inconsequential knowledge at school level. Ignoring the needs of the poor who did not have such sources of powerful knowledge to compensate for them at home.



Both personalities' opposition consisted in deep understanding of facts and truths around them through the provision of continuous questioning, conferences with experts on different subjects -this was encouraged both in San Donato and Barbiana by Milani and it is still provided to the members of the s.d.c.<sup>33</sup> once a week on Wednesday ever since Preca started it- and Knowledge which goes against the grain of the popular attitude.

This last aspect could be seen through how both encouraged to use methods and life styles different to the rest. Milani managed a school not alike the others in order to remedy the knowledge loss of the poor through the years and as a clear sign of contradiction to that present day way of managing schools. He also sought out different ways of teaching to demonstrate the possibility of different routes. Preca also sought out to teach against the grain demanding that his members acted different to the majority of his time, at the risk of being labelled weird in order to send clear signs of contradictions to the way of life through the look, attitudes and behaviour.

## **4.6 Conclusion:**

In this chapter we have seen the similarities between the two characters and have taken their gist as refreshing ways in making the educational experience a truly worthwhile and life changing experience. The referred point of which the two make emphasis on were a continuous and relevant experience, the importance of language and communication, class environment between student and teacher and the emphasis on elaborating knowledge which makes a difference.

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<sup>33</sup> Society of Christian Doctrine founded in 1907 by Fr. George Preca

# **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

## **5.1 Introduction**

We have seen that both Preca and Milani have a common aim to support and assist the weak not in superiority but in a sense of duty towards those who are equally important.

## **5.2 Overall findings**

- Both protagonists offered continuous and relevant education to compensate for other educational entities which were treating education in an inconsistent and tiresome way. In this way education was fulfilling its purpose of forming faithful and knowledgeable persons.
- Language and communication were reviewed as the source for a difference in life and a transformative educational experience. They provided it in their respective fields to those who lacked it.
- It was indicated that there should be no oppressive dominance in class, the field in which knowledge culture and life should be discussed and analysed. Therefore all the members involved in class should respect each other's changing role.
- The educational transforming experience can only be achieved if consequential knowledge or rather truth, is always kept at the top of one's list when discussing, even when it hurts.

## **5.3 Other areas of further research**

This study has not tried to give any last words on the topic. There were various other questions which arose while doing the study. These included:

- What is the teacher's role in adapting the vivid points of the analysis into the contextual life of today's schools?
- What is the relation between a student living in the personality's time and today's time?
- What role does technology play in education today?

- What is the difference between teachers who are members of Preca's society and those who are not?
- what foundations are behind today's teachers? Are they based on work/ job (money) or on vocational basis (way of life/ life giving)?

It is hoped that this study will form the basis for deeper studies on what is believed that today's education needs to look at.

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