



Bread and Brain, Education and Poverty



Workshop 4-6 November 2013 – The Pontifical Academy of Sciences has a rich history of transdisciplinary meetings. Given the nature of the urgent and dramatic challenges regarding education and poverty and the broad spectrum of disciplines involved, this time we have decided to focus on some aspects that have been undergoing substantial improvements and may bring hope and practical solutions to the current situation. The pairing of “Bread and Brain” in the title of our Working Group refers to the new technologies to improve food and nutrition on the one hand and to the effects of poverty and malnutrition on neurocognitive development and education and how to overcome them, on the other. We have reached on both sides a high level of expertise that can guide policy makers in their decisions to bring solutions to the global emergency of millions of children of the new generations still deprived of food and nutrients and excluded from a most needed education, two conditions essential for human dignity.

In this spirit we have divided our meeting into four sessions to profit from the discussions of experts on plant genetics, brain development, food security and education that may converge towards integrated solutions to improve the quality of human life. We fully agree with Blessed John Paul II who, already in 1982, in his address to the Study Week of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on *Modern Biological Experimentation*, organized by Professor Jérôme Lejeune, had stated the following: “I wish to recall ... the important advantages that come from the increase of food products and from the formation of new edible plant species for the benefit of all, especially people most in need”. It’s clear that this moral challenge also applies to the best use of the new technologies in the field of neurocognitive development and education today.

Those of us who are Christian ask the Lord for “our” daily bread, to give it to *us*, not to *me* only, but to *others in common with me*, to my brothers and sisters, which means providing them with sustainable nutrition, healthy brain development, good education and, finally, the supersubstantial bread of Jesus Christ.

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