



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION
(FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS)**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 20 February 2020*

[Multimedia]

*Your Eminences,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters!*

I thank Cardinal Versaldi for his kind words of introduction, and I warmly greet you all. Your meeting in Plenary Assembly has given you the opportunity, in these days, to review the concentrated work carried out over the past three years, and to plan future commitments with an open heart and with hope. The field of competence of the Dicastery engages you in the fascinating world of education, which is never a repetitive action, but the art of growth, of maturation, and for this reason, it is never the same.

Education is a dynamic reality, it is a movement that brings people to the light. It is a peculiar kind of movement, with characteristics that make it a dynamism of growth, aimed at the full development of the person in his/her individual and social dimension. I would like to dwell on some of its typical traits.

One aspect of education is that it is an *ecological movement*: one of the driving forces that aims at complete formation. Education that places the person and his/her potential at its centre has the purpose of bringing him/her to knowledge of self, of the common home in which the person lives, and above all of the discovery of fraternity as a relationship that produces the multicultural composition of humanity, a source of mutual enrichment.

This educational movement, as I wrote in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, contributes to restoring “the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and spiritually with God”. This naturally requires educators who are “capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care” (n. 210).

With regard to method, education is an *inclusive movement*. An inclusion that reaches out to all the excluded: those who are excluded due to poverty, vulnerability caused by war, famine and natural disasters, by social selectivity, and family and existential difficulties. An inclusion that is made tangible in educational action in favour of refugees, victims of human trafficking, and migrants, without distinction on the basis of sex, religion or ethnicity. Inclusion is not a modern invention, but it is an integral part of the Christian salvific message. Nowadays it is necessary to accelerate this inclusive movement of education to counter the throwaway culture, which originates from the denial of fraternity as a constitutive element of humanity.

Another typical aspect of education is that of being a *peace-making movement*. It is harmonious — I will speak about this, but they are connected — a peaceful movement, a bringer of peace. Young people themselves are witnesses to this; with their commitment and their thirst for truth they constantly remind us that “hope is not utopian and that peace is always a good that can be attained” (*Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 9 January 2020). The peace-building educational movement is a force to be nurtured to counter the “egoism” that generates non-peace, rifts between generations, between peoples, between cultures, between rich and poor populations, between men and women, between economy and ethics, between humanity and the environment (cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Global Educational Pact. Instrumentum Laboris*, 2020). These fractures and forms of opposition, which spoil relationships, conceal a fear of diversity and difference. For this reason, education is required, with its pacifying force, to form people capable of understanding that diversity does not hinder unity; on the contrary, it is indispensable to the richness of one’s own identity and that of all people.

Another typical quality of education is that of being a *team movement*. It is never the action of a single person or institution. The Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum educationis* affirms that school “establishes as it were a centre whose work and progress must be shared together by families, teachers, associations of various types that foster cultural, civic, and religious life, as well as by civil society and the entire human community” (n. 5). For its part, the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, whose 30 anniversary of promulgation falls this year, affirms that a “Catholic University pursues its objectives through its formation of an authentic human community animated by the spirit of Christ” (n. 21). But every university is called to be a “community of study, research and formation” (Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium*, art. 11 § 1).

This team movement has long been in crisis for several reasons. Therefore, I felt the need to

promote the *Global Educational Pact* Day this coming 14 May, entrusting its organization to the Congregation for Catholic Education. It is an appeal addressed to all those who have political, administrative, religious and educational responsibilities to re-invent the “village of education”. The purpose of the gathering is not to develop programmes, but to find the common step “to revive the commitment for and with the younger generations, renewing the passion for a more open and inclusive education, capable of patient listening, constructive dialogue and mutual understanding”. The educational pact must not be a simple order, it must not be a “rehash” of the positivisms we have received from an enlightened education. It must be revolutionary.

Never before has there been such a need to unite efforts in a broad *educational alliance* to form mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentation and opposition and rebuilding the fabric of relationships for a more fraternal humanity. To achieve these goals takes courage: “The courage to place the human person at the centre [...]. The courage to capitalize on our best energies [...]. The courage to train individuals who are ready to offer themselves in service to the community” (*Message for the launch of the Educational Pact*, 12 September 2019). The courage to pay educators properly.

Furthermore, I see in the making of a global educational pact the possible growth of an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary alliance, which the recent Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium* indicated for ecclesiastical studies, as the “vital intellectual principle of the unity in difference of knowledge and respect for its multiple, correlated and convergent expressions, ... also in relation to the fragmented and often disintegrated panorama of contemporary university studies and to the pluralism — uncertain, conflicting and relativistic — of cultural beliefs and cultural options” (*Foreword*, 4 c).

In this broad perspective of education I hope you may succeed in drawing up the programme for the coming years, in particular in drafting a Directory, in compiling a World Observatory, and in the qualification and updating of ecclesiastical studies with greater attention to university pastoral care as an instrument of the new evangelization. These are all commitments which can contribute effectively to consolidating the pact, in the sense taught to us by the Word of God: “the covenant between God and men, the covenant between generations, the covenant between peoples and cultures, the covenant — in school — between teachers and learners — and also parents — the covenant between man, animals, plants and even the inanimate realities which make our common home beautiful and colourful. Everything is related to everything else, everything is created to be a living icon of God Who is the Trinity of Love!” (*Address to the Academic Community of the Sophia University Institute of Loppiano*, 14 November 2019).

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for the work you do with dedication every day. I invoke upon you the gifts of the Holy Spirit to give you strength in your delicate ministry of education. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.

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