

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 220420e

Wednesday 20.04.2022

Audience with the delegation of the “Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education Project”

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation from the “Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education Project”.

The following is the discourse prepared by the Holy Father for the occasion and handed out to those present, and his impromptu address:

Prepared address of the Holy Father

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to greet you, the members of the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education Project, during your pilgrimage to Rome. May the joy of these days of Easter fill your hearts, and may your meeting here in the Eternal City strengthen you in fidelity to the Lord and his Church, and enrich your efforts to highlight the distinctiveness of our Catholic vision of education.

In an age awash in information, often transmitted without wisdom or critical sense, the task of forming present and future generations of Catholic teachers and students remains as important as ever. As educators, you are called to nurture the desire for truth, goodness and beauty that lies in the heart of each individual, so that all may learn how to love life and be open to the fullness of life. This involves discerning innovative ways of uniting research with best practices so that teachers can serve the whole person in a process of integral human development. In short, this means forming the head, hands and heart together: preserving and enhancing the link between learning, doing and feeling in the noblest sense. In this way, you will be able to offer not only an excellent academic curriculum, but also a coherent vision of life inspired by the teachings of Christ.

In this sense, the Church’s work of education aims not only “at developing the maturity of the human person... but is especially directed towards ensuring that those who have been baptized become daily more appreciative of the gift of faith which they have received” (Second Vatican Council’s Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, 2).

Our faith is a great grace that each of us must daily nurture and help others to nurture as well. In the light of faith, educators and students alike come to see each other as beloved children of the God who created us to be brothers and sisters in the one human family. On this basis, Catholic education commits us, among other things, to the building of a better world by teaching mutual coexistence, fraternal solidarity and peace. It is my hope that your discussions in these days will assist you in developing effective means of fostering these values at all levels of your academic institutions and in the minds and hearts of your students.

At the same time, Catholic education is also evangelization: bearing witness to the joy of the Gospel and its power to renew our communities and provide hope and strength in facing wisely the challenges of the present time. I trust that this study visit will inspire each of you to rededicate himself or herself with generous zeal to your vocation as educators, to your efforts to solidify the foundations of a more humane and solidary society, and thus the advancement Christ's kingdom of truth, holiness, justice and peace.

I thank you and encourage you to continue in your important work, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Entrusting all of you to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, I cordially impart my Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in Christ the Risen Saviour. And please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

Impromptu words of the Holy Father

Thank you very much for visiting. I lived in Ireland, in Dublin, in Milltown Park, to study English. I studied English but I forgot, excuse me! I will speak in Italian. Thank you for your visit. I am pleased, especially after hearing you [addressing the group chaperone]. I understood almost everything, but you went at a hundred miles an hour and at times I didn't understand! I like this vision of education – I will put it into my own words – in tension between risk and security. What you do is good. We must leave behind that image of education, according to which educating means filling the head with ideas. In this way we educate automatons, brainboxes, but not people. Educating is risking in that tension between the mind, the heart and the hands: in harmony, to the point of thinking what we feel and do; of feeling what we think and do; and of doing what we feel and think. It is harmony.

But we need Ariadne's thread to come out of the labyrinth... I also think of the maze of life. There are many things that growing boys and girls do not understand: what is Ariadne's thread for helping the young not to get lost in the labyrinth? Walking together. One cannot educate without walking alongside the person one is educating. It is good when we find educators who walk alongside boys and girls. And you [in the subtitle of the book you have given me] say something very good: "When rhetoric meets reality". Educating is not a question of saying purely rhetorical things; educating is about bringing what we say in line with reality. Girls and boys have the right to make mistakes, but the educator accompanies them along the way to guide them in these errors, so they are not dangerous. The true educator is not afraid of mistakes, no: he or she accompanies them, take them by the hand, listens, engages in dialogue. He or she is not afraid, and waits. This is *human* education. As you can see, there is an abyss between the legacy of "macrocephalic" education and education itself, which is leading forward and nurturing, helping to grow. Thank you for this *human* approach to education. And keep going forward!

The last thing you [again addressing the group chaperone] mentioned: the dialogue between the young and the elderly is important. This is very important. Even bypassing parents: not out of rebellion, but to seek out the source. The roots. Because the tree, in order to grow, needs to have a close relationship with its roots. It does not stay fixed at the roots, no, but it is in relation to the roots. There is a poet from my homeland who says something beautiful: "Everything that flourishes on a tree comes from what it has underground". Without roots, one does not go forward. Only with roots do we become people: not museum statues, like certain cold, starched, rigid traditionalists, who think that providing for life means living attached to the roots. There is a need for this relationship with the roots, but also to go forward. And this is the true tradition: to take from the past in order to move forward. Tradition is not static; it is dynamic, forward-reaching. There was a French theologian from the fifth century, a monk, who wondered, on this subject, how dogma could progress without ruining the inspiration of its own tradition, how it should grow without hiding in the past. And he said in Latin: "*Ut annis scilicet*

consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate": it progresses by consolidating with the years, developing with time, sublimating with age. *Consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate*, this is tradition: it is necessary to educate in the tradition, but in order to grow.

Thank you, thank you very much for your work. Thank you, thank you. And now I will give my blessing to you, from Green Ireland! [Blessing]
