



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING
OF DIRECTORS OF "SCHOLAS OCCURRENTES"**

*Synod Hall
Thursday, 4 September 2014*

I feel like one who is told, "Say something". And so he says: "Ok, I will improvise", but then he pulls out his notes.

These are more or less the points I wanted to speak to you about, to which I shall add what I have seen here.

First of all, thank you. Your presence here is a rare occurrence. I already said as much to the President of the Pontifical Academy, Bishop Sánchez Sorondo, who has launched the movement. It is an unusual event for its scope, kind of work, degree of intensity, the people coming and going, the novel protocol... within the framework of the third Global Network Day of the Scholas Occurrentes. So now, the idea is encounter. To promote the culture of encounter is the challenge. Today there is no longer doubt that the world is at war. And no one doubts, naturally, that the world is in disagreement. We need, then, to foster a culture of encounter in some way. A culture of integration, of encounter and of bridges. Right? And this is the work that you are undertaking. I thank the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo for making all of this possible. Many people have become involved. I already know that these two, when united, are formidable: they get things going. Here, an African proverb comes to mind: "It takes a village to raise a child". To raise a person we need all of this.

We cannot leave boys and girls on their own, please! It is already common parlance to speak of "street children". "Street children", as if a child could stand alone, excluded from everything that makes up the cultural context, by everything that implies family.

Yes, the family is there, the school is there, the culture is there, but the child is alone. Why? Because the educational project has broken down. So, the educational project needs to be reconstructed. Once, in the fourth grade, I was disrespectful to the teacher and the teacher had my mother called. My mother came, I stayed in the classroom, and the teacher went out. Afterwards they called me, and my mother, very calmly — I feared the worst — said to me: “did you do this, this and this?”. “Yes”, I answered. “Apologize to her”. And she made me apologize in front of her. I was happy. It was easy. The second act, however, took place when I got home! Nowadays, at least in many schools in my country, a teacher writes a note in the child’s exercise book and the next day the mother or father lodges a complaint against her. The educational project has broken down. It is no longer everyone together for the child. And thus we are talking about society too. That is, to rebuild the educational project, to reconstruct that village in order to raise the children. We cannot leave them on their own, we cannot leave them on the street, unprotected, at the mercy of a world in which the cult of money, of violence and of waste prevails. I speak often on this topic, but it is evident that the throwaway culture has taken hold. What is not useful is thrown away. Children are thrown away in that they are not educated or are not wanted. The birth rate in some developed countries is alarming. The elderly are thrown away — and remember what I said about the children and the elderly in the future — in that this system of hidden euthanasia has been established. That is, the social services cover you up to this point, then you can die. They throw away kids, the elderly, and now there is a new castoff, a whole generation of young people without work in undeveloped countries. The figure quoted in developed countries is 75 million young people, aged 25 and under, without work. A generation of young people is being thrown away. All of which obliges us to set to, in order not to leave children on their own, at least do this much. This is our job — children and the elderly are undoubtedly the most vulnerable people in this culture in which waste predominates, and even young people. It has affected them too — in order to maintain a balanced financial system where the human person is no longer at the centre, but money.

To this end, it is very important to strengthen the bonds: social, family, personal bonds. Everyone, but most of all the children and young people, need an appropriate setting, a truly human habitat, with suitable conditions for their harmonious personal development and for their integration into the greater habitat of society. Thus it is imperative to create a strong and extensive “network” of truly human bonds, which supports children, which opens them to life in a calm and confident manner, which is an authentic place for encounter, in which the true, the good and the beautiful may find a just balance. If a child does not have all of this, nothing is left for him but the path to delinquency and dependency. I urge you to continue working to create this human village, ever more human, which offers children a present of peace and a future of hope.

In you, at this moment, I see the face of so many children and young people whom I nurture in my heart, because I know they are potential thrown-away material, and for whom it is worthwhile to work unceasingly. Thank you for what you do for this initiative, where the bonds between you must also prevail so as not to give rise to internal struggles: “no, I’ll have this myself”, “I have

appropriated it”, “this is for my sector”. No, no, no. That is to say, I will create bonds of unity if I am capable of realizing such an initiative in which each one renounces his will to command and nurtures his will to serve. I ask you to pray for me, because I need it. And may God bless you!

by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 37, 12 September 2014

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