



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE SYMPOSIUM
ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

Saturday, 3 July 2004

*Monsignor,
Dear Friends,*

1. I cordially greet the teachers, educators and parents here representing universities and pedagogical associations, as well as those in charge of the pastoral apostolate in schools and universities that the Episcopal Conferences of Europe provide. I thank Bishop Cesare Nosiglia, President of the Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education, Schools and Universities of the Italian Bishops' Conference, for his words and his dedication in organizing the Symposium entitled: *The challenges of education*.

2. I am delighted with your attention to educational issues that are particularly important in Europe today, when many young people are in a state of confusion. In their educational policies, States are struggling to find new approaches for dealing with the problems of adolescents in their personal lives or in their social milieu. Financial needs often induce people to give priority to academic learning, to the detriment of the integral education of the young. To give youth a future, it is important that education be understood as a search for the integral and harmonious development of the person, as the maturation of the moral conscience to discern good and act accordingly, and as attention to the spiritual dimension of young people as they develop. The European Continent has been enriched by a humanist tradition that has communicated down the centuries spiritual and moral values whose fundamental reference and full meaning are found in its Christian roots.

3. Wherever students live, education must help them each day to grow into more and more mature men and women, and "to be" better rather than "to have" more. Scholastic formation is one aspect

of education, but not the only one. The essential connection between all the dimensions of education must be constantly reinforced. A coordinated educational process will lead to ever greater unity in the personality and life of adolescents.

It is right to mobilize everyone and to join forces to work for young people: parents, teachers, educators, chaplaincy teams. They should all also remember that what they teach must be supported by their own witness and example. In fact, young people are sensitive to the witness of adults who are their models. The family continues to be the essential place for education.

4. The lack of hope in the youth of today is blatant; yet it conceals within it a whole range of aspirations, as I have come to understand especially during the *World Youth Days*. In my Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europe*, I noted that "at the root of the loss of hope is an *attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ*", making man occupy the place of God. "Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man" (n. 9). True education must start from the truth about man, the affirmation of his dignity and transcendent vocation. Looking at every young person in this anthropological perspective means seeking to help him develop the best of himself so that in exercising all his skills he may carry out whatever God calls him to do.

5. The Christian community also plays a role in the educational process. It is responsible for passing on the Christian values and making known Christ as a person who calls each one to a more and more beautiful life and to the discovery of the salvation and happiness that he offers us. May Christians never shrink from proclaiming to the new generations Christ, the source of hope and light on their journey! May they also be able to welcome teenagers and their families, to listen to them and help them, even if this may often be very demanding! It is the business of all Christian communities and of society as a whole to educate the young. It is up to us to present the essential values to them, so that they themselves may be responsible for them and do their share in building up society. I hope that your Symposium will give new dynamism to the educational process in the various European countries, and as I entrust you to the Virgin Mary, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.