



The Holy See

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE WORLD CONGRESS OF THE CIEO (CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
OFFICE)**

[New York, 5-8 June 2019]

[Multimedia]

Dear President, Dear Secretary General, Dear Friends,

I am pleased to convey my most heartfelt greeting to all of you in New York City, who have brought about the International Congress of the Catholic International Education Office (OIEC) on the theme *Educating to fraternal humanism to build a civilization of love*. I offer a particular greeting to your President, Mrs Augusta Muthigani, and to the Secretary General, Mr Philippe Richard, as well as to the Secretaries of OIEC Regional Committees and members of the various organizations.

Your enthusiastic participation shows the passion with which you live the mission to educate in the spirit of the Gospel and according to the teachings of the Church. I thank you for this service and through you I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to all those who work in Catholic education: lay faithful, men and women religious, and priests. My warmest greetings go out to the millions of students who attend Catholic institutes in city centres and especially in the peripheries, and also to their families. Young people, as I said at World Youth Day in Panama, belong to the 'today' of God and therefore are also the today of our educational mission.

The analysis by which you propose to identify the contribution education makes to fraternal humanism is in harmony with the Declaration Gravissimum Educationis of the Second Vatican Council — I quote the Council: "All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their

ultimate goal, their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth". And it continues: "children and young people ... should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good" (n. 1). [The Second Vatican Council](#) stops here.

Therefore, the humanism that Catholic educational institutions are called to construct — as [Saint John Paul II](#) stated — is one that "advocates a vision of society centred on the human person and his inalienable rights, on the values of justice and peace, on a correct relationship between individuals, society and the State, on the logic of solidarity and subsidiarity. It is a humanism capable of giving a soul to economic progress itself, so that it may be directed to 'the promotion of each individual and of the whole person'".^[1] This humanistic perspective today cannot fail to include ecological education, which promotes a covenant between humanity and the environment, at "the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God" ([Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 210](#)).

It is not an easy challenge, one that certainly cannot be faced alone, in isolation. For this reason too, the sharing that you experience during the days of your Congress is very important for accomplishing a work of discernment, in the face of opportunities and difficulties, and for renewing your "educational stake", also drawing from the great witnesses of men and women teacher-Saints, whose example is a bright beacon that can illuminate your service.

One of the main difficulties that education encounters today is the widespread tendency *to deconstruct humanism*. Individualism and consumerism create competition that devalues cooperation, obfuscates common values and undermines the roots of the most fundamental rules of coexistence. The culture of indifference too, which envelops relationships between individuals and peoples, as well as care for the common home, corrodes the meaning of humanism.

In order to deal with this deconstruction, *the synergy of the various educational spheres* is essential. The first is the family, as a place in which one learns to go out of oneself and "to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one" (Apostolic Exhortation [Amoris Laetitia](#), 276). All teachers are called to cooperate in this process of growth in humanity, both with their professionalism and by their consistent witness of life, in order to help young people be active builders of a more supportive and more peaceful world. In particular, Catholic educational institutions have the mission of offering horizons open to transcendence, because Catholic education "makes the difference" by cultivating spiritual values in young people.

Rebuilding humanism also means directing educational work toward the peripheries, social peripheries and existential peripheries. Through service, encounter and welcome, one offers

opportunities to the weakest and most vulnerable. In this way you grow together and mature by understanding the needs of others. Thus, through patient daily work, the teaching community creates broad inclusion, which goes beyond school walls and, with all its transformative power, extends to the entire society, fostering encounter, peace and reconciliation. In this regard, the *Document on Human Fraternity* that I recently signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, offers elements for reflection and action.

Another danger that threatens the delicate work of education is *the tyranny of results*, which considers individuals as “guinea pigs” and is not interested in their integral growth. It also ignores their difficulties, their mistakes, their fears, their dreams, their freedom. This approach — dictated by the logic of production and consumption — places emphasis mainly on the economy and seems to artificially equate people to machines.

To overcome this obstacle the whole person must be placed at the centre of educational work. To this aim an educator must be competent, qualified and, at the same time, rich in humanity, at ease among the students and ready to promote their human and spiritual growth. An educator must combine his or her quality in teaching with a capacity for attention and loving care for individuals. Both these aspects require permanent formation, that helps teachers and administrators to maintain a high level of professionalism and, at the same time, to nurture their faith and their spiritual motivation.

Today education must also face the obstacle of so-called *rapidification*, in which life is caught in a whirling pace, constantly changing points of reference. In this context identity itself loses consistency and the psychological structure disintegrates before an unceasing transformation that “contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution” [\[2\]](#)

One must respond to the chaotic pace by restoring to time its primary factor, particularly in the developmental period from childhood to adolescence. Indeed individuals need a proper temporal path in order to learn, reinforce and transform knowledge. *Rediscovering time* means, among other things, appreciating silence and pausing to contemplate the beauty of creation, finding the inspiration to protect our ‘common home’ and implementing initiatives aimed at proposing new ways of life with respect for the generations to come. It is an act of responsibility for our posterity, in whom we cannot be disinterested!

Your being together in these days is a great opportunity to rekindle the impulse for Catholic education which gave rise to the OIEC as a global network of national and international organizations. It is also an occasion to enthusiastically take up the current educational challenge of a globalized and digitized world, as well as to relaunch the willingness to cooperate with the international organizations.

Therefore, I hope that all of you may persevere in the educational mission with the joy of doing

and the patience of listening. Let us not lose confidence! As Saint Elizabeth Ann Bailey Seton would say, we must “look up to the heavens” without fear. Let us work to free education from a relativistic horizon and open it up to the integral formation of each and every one.

I thank you for the work you do to make educational institutions places where one can experience growth in the light of the Gospel, to make them ‘construction sites’ of a fraternal humanism in order to build a civilization of love. I pray for you. And you too, please pray for me. Thank you!

[1] *Address to University Professors, 9 September 2000.*

[2] cf. *Encyclical Laudato Si'*, 18.