



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO A DELEGATION OF THE BOARD MANAGING
CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN FRANCE (OGEC)**

Friday, 10 January 2025

[Multimedia]

Dear sisters, dear brothers, good morning!

It is with joy that I welcome you today, promoters of the “Écoles de Vie(s)” project, accompanied by Bishop Philippe Christory of Chartres: Chartres, chez-nous, chez-nous [laughter]. Your formation project, with the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church at the centre, sheds light on a fundamental truth: every person, as fragile as he or she may be, is the bearer of intrinsic value, and we are called to “[acknowledge] each individual as a unique and unrepeatable person” (*Fratelli tutti*, 98). Every human life has an unalienable dignity. With your effort, you proclaim that no-one is useless, no-one is unworthy, that every existence is a gift from God to be welcomed with love and respect. And thank you for this!

This is what Jesus Himself teaches us by His example. In His ministry, He always went towards the sick, the rejected, those who were excluded from the society of His time. And He touched the lepers, He spoke with the marginalized and He welcomed with love those who did not seem to have a place in society. Jesus enters in to contact, “Jesus enters into direct contact with those with disabilities, since, like every form of infirmity, disabilities must not be ignored and denied. Yet Jesus not only relates to disabled persons; He also changes the meaning of their experience. In fact, he showed a new approach ... In Jesus’ eyes, every human condition, including those marked by grave limitations, is an invitation to a unique relationship – a unique relationship – with God that enables people to flourish” (*Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*, 11 April 2024). And this is important: the relationship with God always makes people flourish again, always!

Welcoming everyone with their fragilities and putting into relation a large number of actors, you embody that outgoing Church that I have often expressed a wish for, an open Church, a welcoming Church, capable of being close to everyone and of healing the wounds of those who suffer, of caressing tenderly those who are deprived of affection and raising up those who have fallen to the ground. Think that in only one situation is it acceptable to look down on someone from above, in one situation: to help them get up again. The only situation in which it is acceptable to look down on someone from above. We are required to create spaces where they may express themselves fully. We must make room for their dreams, welcome them and communicate hope to them. Your work enables them to discover that their life has meaning and that they have a unique role to play in society.

I am glad that your project is decidedly in line with the vision of education proposed in the Global Education Compact: an integral education that does not merely transmit knowledge, but seeks to form men and women capable of compassion and fraternal love. In this way you contribute to an education that prepares the future, forming not only competent professionals, but also mature adults who will be the artisans of a more beautiful and more humane world, imbued with the Gospel.

In this Jubilee year of hope, I encourage you to persist with determination, because only by restoring centrality to the human person will we be able to build a truly just and solidarity-based society. Your initiative is a practical response to this aspiration: to restore to people, all people, marginalized by disabilities or fragilities, to their place within a fraternal and joyful community. May your work inspire other initiatives in support of the most vulnerable, and may your action open prospects for an integral education that the young generations urgently need.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of hope and educator of Jesus, accompany you and protect you. I bless you from my heart, with all the people you serve, the young people you form, all the families and all those who support this good project. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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