



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE DELEGATES OF THE FEDERATION OF INSTITUTES OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (FIDAE)

Friday, 29 December 1978

Beloved Delegates of the Federation of Institutes of Educational Activities! Knowing of your presence in Rome on the occasion of the traditional assembly at the end of the year, I wished to reserve for you and for me a special meeting with you, not only because of your large numbers but also and above all for the specialized witness you bear as representatives of the Catholic School in Italy. I have been told that my venerated Predecessor Paul VI never failed to address an enlightened word to you in similar circumstances in past years. And so I thought I, too, could do the same and respond, in the first place, to the deference, the devotion and the fervour of your visit. Yes, beloved Brothers and Sons, I wish to thank you for your affectionate feelings, and even more for the intelligent, indefatigable work, made precious by so many sacrifices — little and great — that scholastic-educational activity involves nowadays. I am not speaking just of the work of coordination and organization that is necessary in order that your Federation, *qua talis*, may function smoothly, spreading for the common benefit, among the many Institutes that it unites information, guidelines, proposals and initiatives. I am speaking especially of the work that each Institute and, in his own sphere, each of the directors and teachers, carries out daily, tackling and overcoming problems that are not always easy, in order to make the function of the schools, founded by or depending on the Ecclesiastical Authority, in the framework of public education more and more incisive, profitable, original, and exemplary. My words wish to be a recognition and at the same time an encouragement. In Italian, recognition (*riconoscimento*) — I know for the obvious etymological reason — also means gratitude (*riconoscenza*). Well, the recognition-gratitude that has come to you from the Italian Episcopal Conference is fully shared by the Pope, who assures you that he follows your well-deserving activity with sympathy and confidence. In an age such as ours, it is urgent more than in the past, to keep the image — the typology, I would say — of a Christian school which, in ever loyal observance of the general regulations laid down by the competent scholastic legislation of the respective country, will assume as its starting point and, also, as its goal, the idea of a complete education — human, moral and religious — according to the Gospel of Our Lord. Before programmes of study, before the contents of the various courses — as you well know — this *unavoidable reference* to the superior and transcendent teaching of Christ the Master is and remains essential for a really Catholic school. Without this reference, it would lack the very source of inspiration, it would lack its central axis, it would lack that specific element which defines it and characterizes it in the

midst of other didactic organizational structures or other centres of cultural promotion. It is only right, therefore, that it should be required by the individual Institutes depending on your Association, and also by all those who operate responsibly in them at the various levels. Wishing to interpret the initials FIDAE, I noted that you have recently adopted a reading that is partly new in order to stress "educational activities". This clearer pedagogical and formative finalism does you honour, because it means precisely that, for you, the teaching of scholastic subjects and the use of the teaching aids necessary for instruction, take their place in the wider programme of that Christian "paideia", which, in its turn, takes its place in the evangelizing mission entrusted to the Church by her divine Founder. This approach gives me sincere pleasure and I greatly appreciate this collaboration. I exhort you, therefore, always to remain consistent and faithful to both, sustained by the thought or, better, by the conviction that in this way you are carrying out a precious ecclesial service, as a cultural and civil one. With my cordial Blessing. © Copyright 1978 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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