



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO VILLA FLAMINIA INSTITUTE**

Sunday, 23 February 1997

1. I greet you affectionately, young people, teachers and parents, whom I have the joy of meeting here at the *Villa Flaminia Institute, founded 40 years ago by the Brothers of the Christian Schools.*

I am pleased to visit this important educational facility, which is active in Holy Cross Parish in the Flaminio neighbourhood. I greet you in particular, dear sons of St John Baptist de La Salle, and encourage you to continue the educational service which has benefited a great many children and young people over these past 40 years. I extend my cordial greetings to all the teaching staff of the institute's various schools.

I also offer my greetings to the parents and particularly to the alumni and the students: thank you, dear friends, for your warm welcome. I am especially grateful to your two representatives, who have accurately expressed your sentiments. The boys and girls of the parish who attend other schools have also come, and so *this is a meeting with the parish as well as with the school community.*

2. This occasion affords me an opportunity to stress the importance of an *educational project* that, beginning with the *family*, can find distinct but converging spheres where it can thrive, starting with the family, then the *parish community* and the *school*. This strong focus on education is a specific task of *Catholic schools*, as the religious of Villa Flaminia, who dedicate their whole lives to the mission of education, well know.

Some might remark: if young people take part in the parish youth programme, why do they need a Catholic school? Or vice versa. I answer: the parish community is a place for *religious and spiritual* education. School is a place for *cultural* education. The two dimensions must be integrated,

because the same values inspire them: they are the values of Christian families who, in a society dominated by relativism and threatened by existential emptiness, intend to offer their children an *education based on the unchangeable values of the Gospel*.

Today, *co-operation between family, parish and school* is more necessary than ever, not to restrict the freedom of adolescents, but to mould it and enable it to make responsible and well-motivated choices. Catholic schools, while providing a quality education, hold up *Christian values* to children, inviting them to build their own lives on them. Teaching these values, for those who know how to accept and live them consistently, yields highly positive results —as experience confirms— at the personal, family and professional levels.

3. In Italy an overall reform of the school system is about to be introduced: I sincerely hope that *parity for non-State* schools, which offer a valid public service appreciated and desired by many families, will finally be put into practice.

I hope, boys and girls, that you will treasure your various educational experiences, those of the family first of all, as well as those you have at school and in the parish. May you know how to communicate the values in which you believe, and feel committed to being witnesses of love and truth in every circumstance of life.

I would like to close by wishing everyone here a pleasant Sunday, and I offer my Blessing to the school, to the teachers, to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to the parents, the young people and the children. I thank you once again for your kind and warm welcome.