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Pope: 'Education concerns the future of humanity'

Pope Francis says poverty, discrimination, climate change, the globalization of indifference and the exploitation of human beings all prevent the flourishing of millions of children, thus his call to join forces to achieve a broad educational covenant.

By Linda Bordoni

Despite the objectives formulated by the UN and other international bodies, Pope Francis said humanity is in need of a renewed educational covenant "aimed at forming mature persons capable of mending the fabric of human relationships and creating a more fraternal world."

He was addressing participants at the end of a two-day conference in the Vatican on Friday entitled "Education. The Global Compact". The Conference was one of a series of events leading up to the signing of a "Global Compact for Education", promoted by the Pope, in the Vatican on 14 May 2020.

"Poverty, discrimination, climate change, the globalization of indifference and the exploitation of human beings all prevent the flourishing of millions of children," he said.

Reflecting on how basic education has become a "normative ideal throughout the world," he praised the progress that has been made in making primary education almost universal while also narrowing the gender gap.

"Nonetheless," he continued, "each generation needs to consider how best to hand on its knowledge and its values to the next, since it is through education that men and women attain their maximum potential and become conscious, free and responsible."

Education concerns the future of humanity

Thus, Pope Francis underscored, "concern for education is concern for future generations and for the future of humanity. It is a concern profoundly rooted in hope and it calls for generosity and courage."

He elaborated on the fact that education is not merely about transmitting concepts and that it demands cooperation on the part of all involved: "the family, the school and social, cultural and religious institutions."

A state of breakdown

"Today what I have called the "educational compact" between families, schools, nations and the world, culture and cultures, is in crisis, and indeed in a state of breakdown," he said noting that it is "serious, and it can only be fixed through a renewed universal effort of generosity and cooperation."

Thus, Pope Francis said, all members of society are called, in some way, to renew and consolidate their commitment in favour of education.

"To achieve this, there has to be an integration of disciplines, culture, sports, science, relaxation and recreation; bridges have to be built to overcome the forms of enclosure that trap us in our little world and to launch into the global open seas in respect for all traditions," he said .

Teaching a culture of dialogue and encounter

He called for an effort that gives value to traditions and cultures so that future generations may develop “their own self-understanding by encountering and appropriating cultural diversity and change.”

“This,” he said, “will enable the promotion of a culture of dialogue, encounter and mutual understanding, in a spirit of serenity and tolerance.”

Families, schools, communities

Pope Francis called in particular for a greater participation of families and local communities in educational projects.

Finally, he praised and upheld the work and responsibility of teachers pointing out that in a new educational compact, the function of teachers, as educators, must be acknowledged and supported by every possible means: “By their knowledge, patience and dedication, they communicate a way of living and acting that embodies a richness that is not material but spiritual, and creates the men and woman of tomorrow.”

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