

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE PARTICIPANTS  
OF THE WORLD CONGRESS:  
“EDUCATING TODAY AND TOMORROW. A RENEWING  
PASSION” ORGANIZED BY THE CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC  
EDUCATION  
(DEGLI ISTITUTI DI STUDI)**

*Aula Paolo VI  
Saturday, November 21, 2015*

---

The following text is a translation of the transcript of a dialogue between Pope Francis and participants in the world congress: “Educating Today and Tomorrow. A Renewing Passion”. The congress, organized by the Congregation for Catholic Education, was held in Rome from 18 to 21 November. The dialogue in Italian and Spanish took place in the Paul VI Hall on Saturday morning, 21 November.

**Prof. Roberto Zappalà, academic director at the Gonzaga Institute in Milan, Italy:**

Catholic educational institutions are present in a great diversity of nations and contexts: in wealthier nations, developing nations, cities, rural areas, nations with a Catholic majority and those in which Catholicism is a minority. In this great variety of situations, what, in your opinion, enables an institution to be truly Christian?

**Pope Francis:** We Christians are also a minority. What comes to mind is what a great thinker said: “Educating is introducing truth in its totality”. One cannot speak about Catholic education without speaking of humanity, because Catholic identity is precisely God who became man. Going forward with fully human attitudes and values opens the door to the Christian seed. Then comes faith. Educating in a Christian way is not only doing a catechesis: this is one part. It is not only proselytizing — never proselytize in schools! Never!

— Educating in a Christian way is raising young people, children, in human values in every reality, and one of these realities is transcendence . Today there is a tendency toward neopositivism, which is educating in immanent things, in the value of immanent things, and this exists both in traditionally Christian countries and in traditionally pagan countries. This is not introducing kids, children to the total reality because transcendence is missing. To me, from a Christian perspective, the greatest crisis in education is this closure to transcendence. We are closed to transcendence. It is important to prepare hearts so that the Lord may manifest himself in totality: that is, in the totality of humanity which also has this dimension of transcendence. Educate with humanity but with open horizons. Closure in any form is not useful for education.

**Br Juan Antonio Ojeda, lecturer at the University of Malaga, Spain (in Spanish):** Holy Father, in your discourses, you have referred to the broken bond between school, family and other institutions of society. However, Your Holiness, you also often invite us to promote and personally live a culture of encounter. What does this mean for all the parties engaged in the promotion of education?

**Pope Francis:** It's true that not only have the educational bonds been broken, but also that education has become too selective and elitist. It seems that only those peoples and persons with a certain level or a certain capacity have the right to an education. Certainly not all children, not all young people have the right to education. This is a shameful worldwide reality. It is a reality that is leading us toward human selectivity, and that rather than bringing peoples closer together it distances them. It also distances the rich from the poor; it distances one culture from another.... But this also happens on a smaller scale: the educational pact between the family and school is broken! It must be reinstated. Also the educational pact between the family and State is broken. Other than the ideological State that seeks to take advantage of education in order to advance its own ideology: such as the dictatorships that we saw in the last century. It's awful. Teachers are among the most poorly paid workers: what does this mean? It means that the State is simply not interested. If it were, things would not be like this. The educational pact is broken. This is where our work is, in finding new roads. The witness from Senegal, a father... [he turns to him] you, who spoke: seek to do what Don

Bosco did. Don Bosco, in the most deplorable masonic times in Northern Italy, sought “emergency education”. Today “emergency education” is called for, there must be a focus on “informal education”, because formal education has been impoverished due to the legacy of positivism. It understands only intellectual technicism and the language of the mind, and for this reason has become impoverished. This method of operation needs to be broken. There are experiences with art, with sport.... Art and sport educate! One must be open to new horizons, to creating new models.... There are so many experiences: you know the one that you introduced, “Scholas Occurrentes”, which seeks precisely to open, to open the horizon to a form of education that does not consist only of concepts in the mind. There are three languages: the language of the mind, the language of the heart, and the language of the hands. Education must move along these three roads. Teach how to think, help to feel appropriately and support in doing, so that the three languages are in harmony; so that a child, a youth may think what he feels and what he does; may feel what he thinks and what he does; may do what he feels and what he thinks. In this way, education becomes inclusive — inclusive in human terms — because everyone has a place. The educational pact has been broken by the phenomenon of exclusion. We find the best, the most selective — which may be the most intelligent, or may be those with the most money to pay the best school or university — and we leave the others aside. The world cannot go forward with selective education, because there is no social pact that is common to all. This is a challenge: to seek paths of informal education; those of art, of sport, so very, very many.... A great Brazilian educator — are there Brazilians here? One of your own said that in school — in formal schooling — one must avoid settling into teaching only concepts. A true school must teach concepts, attitudes and values; and when a school is incapable of doing this together, this school is selective, exclusive and for the few. I think the situation of a broken educational pact, such as the one today, is serious; it is serious. Because it leads to selecting “super humans”, but only with the criteria of the mind and only with the criteria of interest. Behind this, there is always the spectre of money — always! — which destroys true humanity. One thing that also helps is respecting a certain and healthy informality; and this does good in education. Because formality can be confused with rigidity. I return to the first question: where there is rigidity there is no humanism, and where there is no humanism, Christ cannot enter! The

doors are closed! The tragedy of closure is rooted in rigidity. The people want another thing, and when I say “people” I mean all of us people, families.... They want coexistence, they want dialogue — Cardinal Versaldi emphasized this: they want dialogue. But when the educational pact is broken there is rigidity, there is no place for dialogue: I have my thoughts, you have yours and there is no place for universality or brotherhood. In two experiences that I have had here, I am speaking of the Vatican, — organized by “Scholas Occurrentes”, I joined [via video conference] with students of the five continents — I saw the need for unity. Today what is being offered is precisely the project of separation, not of unity. Also of selectivity. “What does this mean for the parties engaged in promoting education?”: this is how the question ended. It means taking risks. An educator who does not know how to take risks does not educate. A father and a mother who do not know how to take risks do not teach their child well. Taking risks in a reasonable way. What does this mean? Teaching how to walk. When you teach children to walk, you teach them that one leg must be stable, on the ground that they know; and with the other, they try to go forward. This way if they slip they can protect themselves. This is educating. You are sure at this point, but this is not definitive. You must take another step. Perhaps you slip, but you get up, and move forward.... A true educator must be a master of risks, but of reasonable risks, this is clear. As I have tried to explain now. I don’t know. I think I have answered the question....

**Sr Pina Del Core, Dean of the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences  
Auxilium in Rome, Italy:**

Holy Father, what are the challenges open to educators in the time of the “piecemeal third world war”, in order not to be closed off within themselves but to become patient builders of peace? What encouragement would you like to offer to all educators who dedicate themselves with passion to such a delicate mission?

**Pope Francis:** First of all, I would like to offer testimony with regard to what the Mother General of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary just said: When I was a university rector, my secretary was a Sister of that Congregation — she is still living, Mother Asunción, an elderly woman — but this nun worked as a secretary at the university, and afterwards, in the afternoon, she ate a sandwich, took the car and went to the periphery, to be the principal of a

school for the poor. A secretary at the university faculty of theology went to the poor. So many congregations like this one have never lost this idea. Perhaps at certain times there was more emphasis on working among the city's elite, but they have the vocation of going to the peri- how many foundresses, foundresses of religious congregations, were born to help the girls, or how many founders to help the boys of the streets, the poor children! I spoke of Don Bosco.... It happened by coincidence that the Mother is here, and I would like to publicly thank her Congregation and all the men's and women's congregations that have never forgotten the streets on the periphery! Someone might say: "But we, we have to train managers! We have to train people to think, to do...". This is true, it has to be done. But when I went to Paraguay, at a school on the outskirts, they met for several days with young people, I wouldn't say youth of the street, but poor young people of the outskirts, lacking the bare necessities; and these young people, boys and girls between 14 and 16 years of age, chose to speak about several topics, several important topics. I heard the discussions among them, and the conclusions of one of the discussions on one of the topics which was teen pregnancy. I thought: how are these young people — who live like this, who live on the banks of a river that comes and goes [often overflowing], who have little to eat — able to think like this? Because they had a method and a teacher who took them by the hand. No one, no one can be excluded from the opportunity to receive values, no one! For this reason, here is the first challenge I offer you: leave the places where there are so many teachers — or at least, leave half of them! — and go to the periphery. Look there for the needy, the poor. They have something that the young people of the wealthier neighbourhoods don't have — not by their own fault, but it is a sociological reality: they have the experience of survival, of cruelty, of hunger, and also of injustice. They have a wounded humanity. I think that our salvation comes from the wounds of a wounded man on the cross. From those wounds, they draw wisdom, if there is a good teacher who leads them forward. It is not about going there to do charitable work, to teach reading, to feed..., no! This is necessary, but it is provisional. It is the first step. The challenge — and I encourage you — is going there to help them grow in humanity, in intelligence, in values, in attitudes, so that they may move forward and bring to others the experience that they do not have. In this very room 15 days ago, I think, we received, like today, 7,000 gypsies from throughout Europe. Rom. And the introduction was

made by someone who grew up in a Rom neighbourhood and is now a member of the Slovak parliament. He is able to offer a different experience from those who do not know the periphery. Reality is better understood from the peripheries than from the centre, because you, from the centre are always covered, you in the centre are always protected.... The broken educational pact, selectivity, exclusion, the legacy of selective positivism: these things must be resolved. Go forward, go forward with this challenge. To a congregation of Sisters who have a special vocation in Argentina, for Southern Argentina, for Patagonia, I said: "Please, close half of the colleges in Buenos Aires and send the Sisters there, to the periphery of the homeland"; because from there will come the new contributions, the new values, and also the people capable of renewing the world. Go to the periphery. I want to highlight this: going to the periphery is not only to do charitable work. In education, it is leading by the hand along the street as far as possible. To the Salesians, in Turin, I said: "Do what Don Bosco did, in that time, where there were so many street children, so many. Emergency education. Variegated education". Another thing, because in her question the Sister asked "what are the challenges open to educators in the times of the 'piecemeal third world war'". What is the greatest temptation of war, at this time? Walls. Protecting oneself, walls. The greatest failure that an educator can have, is teaching "within walls". Educating within walls: the walls of selectivity, the walls of a culture of security, the walls of a social sector that is well off and no longer moves forward . I would like to end by inviting men and women educators to rethink this very issue — it is homework to do in the community — rethink the works of mercy, the 14 works of mercy; rethink how to do them in education. I would not ask you to raise your hands, those who know them well, by memory, no. I did this once in this room: it was full.... And only about 20 raised their hands.... But think: in this Year of Mercy, is mercy only giving alms?, or in education, how can I perform works of mercy? That is, they are the works of the Love of the Father; the first words said by Cardinal Versaldi: the works of Love. What can I do to make this Love of the Father which is especially emphasized in this Year of Mercy, reach our educational work? I thank all of you, men and women educators — poorly paid — I thank you for what you do. We must re-teach so much civility. We must re-educate Europe. The Jesuit rector of a college told me how difficult it was to change mentality, in order to re-educate regarding the street that the Church wants today. This is how one

can reach even those who do not believe. I also want to thank an educator who became an educator by way of Canon Law — I do not know how it's possible but he became so. Cardinal Grocholewski is present here. He is an example that responds to the first question: he made agreements with universities throughout the world, Catholic and non-Catholic. Why? Because passion for education leads to this: to “humanizing” people. To him too, I say publicly: Thank you, Your Eminence.

I do not know how the programme continues.... Is it finished? Thank you so much for your work. I wish you a good lunch.

Now let us pray together to Our Lady: Hail Mary....