



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF UNESCO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD LITERACY DAY 1987***

*To Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow
Director General of UNESCO,*

On the occasion of the annual celebration of World Literacy Day, I am pleased to express once again my interest and esteem for UNESCO's activity in this field.

I would like to emphasize how happy I am to see UNESCO give this activity ever more scope and effectiveness, particularly in view of a proximate International Literacy Year, recommended by the United Nations. To that effect, happily, within the framework of the Great Programme of UNESCO, "Education for all", it is intended to place the problem of literacy in close association with the primary school, the normal place where it can best be assured in the best conditions. One must be equally happy in that UNESCO is taking ever more care of those who have the greatest difficulties in life and who are often the least literate: women, rural dwellers, disabled persons, and migrants. These same concerns rightly enter into the framework of the World Decade of cultural development at the initiative of the United Nations.

I also want to lend my support to all that UNESCO does to make ever better known the need for literacy. Without doubt the development of audiovisual communication, a precious instrument for the spread of literacy, has already contributed notably to the expansion of and access to culture for a great number of people, and not only for the elite. Nonetheless writing and reading are privileged instruments for education to reflection and self-mastery, as well as for the development of intellectual faculties and the enrichment of communications of all kinds between men and women.

For all of this, literacy seems to be an important factor of cultural progress and also of professional growth, while one of the causes of the troubling growth of unemployment is the lack of training, for

jobs require an ever greater level of knowledge and general training.

For this great work of literacy, as you well know, Mr. Director General, the Church has multiplied her initiatives and her achievement throughout the entire world. She intends to continue to promote it, bringing her particular contribution to that enterprise for which UNESCO offers remarkable” opportunities of cooperation and exchange of experiences.

I assure you, Mr. Director General, of my prayers for the complete success of this Day and that the action of UNESCO on behalf” of literacy may always be fruitful.”

From the Vatican, 1 September 1987.

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