



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OF THE PONTIFICAL FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL
SCIENCES "AUXILIUM"**

Friday 19 May 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. I extend a cordial welcome to all of you who have gathered here to meet the Successor of Peter and to express again your communion with him and your complete fidelity to the Church.

I first greet the Vice-Grand Chancellor, Mother Antonia Colombo, Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and I thank her for her cordial words. I greet all the members of the *Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences Auxilium*, from the dean to the academic authorities, the teachers, the students and the technical and support staff.

In this providential Jubilee time, you wish to join in the Church's praise with a special note of gratitude to the heavenly Father for the 30 years of your faculty's existence. You are thus a young faculty, enthusiastically committed to making its own contribution in the area of education, supported by the knowledge that in this way it is helping to create a future of hope for everyone.

Thank you for your concrete attention to one of the most important and, today, particularly urgent areas of pastoral activity, which is precisely that of the integral education of the person.

2. Making the most of your special resources as men and women engaged in research and collaborating with other institutions, you wish to share the Church's commitment to promoting a "culture of life" in the name of Christ and with the help of Mary, the Mother and Teacher of the Son of God.

My invitation to you, on the occasion of your faculty's 30th anniversary, is to continue to believe in

the diversified and relational resources of the human person, man and woman, with attention to the transcendent dimension they share. In doing so, you collaborate more and more with the life and mission of the Church, whose principal way in history has been, precisely, that of man, the living man.

Make your own the demands of evangelization in the present cultural moment, especially those which affect human life, the individual, the family, peace and solidarity among peoples. Offer the young people of the new generation a culture that is attentive to human life from its beginning, so that with love and professional skill they can work in support of life wherever it is threatened.

Attention to life and to the person also involves particular attention to the family, "the cradle of life and love, the place in which the individual 'is born' and 'grows'" (*Christifideles laici*, n. 40). The family, in fact, precisely as a "domestic church", on analogy with the Church and participating in her mission, is placed in the world and in history to build a true civilization of love (cf. *Familiaris consortio*, n. 48). If an effort is not made to promote life, the person and the family, it will be difficult to achieve peace in communities and among peoples.

3. The Jubilee Year we are observing delivers a powerful message of life and hope, because in Jesus we have all received "grace upon grace" (*Jn* 1: 16). It is Jesus, the Son of God and Son of man, who is the true criterion for evaluating all temporal reality and every effort to make life more human (cf. *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 1).

Your faculty, which is inspired by the Christian and pedagogical humanism of St John Bosco, considers the person according to the plan of God the Creator and promotes a programme for men and women which is rooted in the Christian vision of life. In your research and academic initiatives your gaze is fixed on Jesus Christ. In him every path leading to the person, considered in his sacredness and dignity as the "image of God" (*Gn* 1: 27), is also an approach to the Father and his love (cf. *Dives in misericordia*, n 1). Human beings, men and women, are the image of God, not only as intelligent and free beings but also as relational beings who find in communion and self-giving the truth and the fullness of their self-achievement.

4. The cultural turning-point which we are now experiencing is a pressing appeal for the whole Church, and especially for your Faculty of Educational Sciences, to reflect more deeply with new cultural paradigms on the "Gospel of life and of the person". Before the threats to life in everyday reality and those "scientifically and systematically programmed" (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 17) which jeopardize the very meaning of democratic society, it is necessary to offer wise and enlightened educational programmes and to make joint, creative plans. This commitment challenges the preventive education whose prophetic ways were marked out by St John Bosco and St Maria Domenica Mazzarello. The constant danger in the contemporary world is the loss of the sense of God and the consequent inability to discover the traces of his presence in creation and in history. This danger can be avoided by rediscovering and fostering the deep, interior human dimension of

integral education enlightened by an evangelical outlook.

This will be one of the frontiers of hope opening to humanity in the new millennium. Continuous technological development needs spiritual support, which can only be provided by cultivating educational interiority.

5. Dear brothers and sisters, what the Church expects of you is a specific contribution in this regard, because you are a faculty which addresses problems in the world of education with interdisciplinary approaches that grasp its complexity and implications. You also cultivate study and research with a particular feminine touch: "In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place, in thought and action, which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination', in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation" (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 99).

You are challenged as teachers and students to put a face on the anthropological vision of the person, man and woman, in accordance with God's plan and to translate it into pedagogically suitable and scientifically valid categories. May your cultural programme, which is the aim of your reflection through respectful and critical dialogue with the human sciences, continue to be rooted in the Church's Magisterium and find in Mary, the "first believer to accept life in its fullness", your Mother and Teacher. At her school you can learn to love, promote and defend life, even at the cost of sacrifices and, perhaps, heroism. Mary, Mother of the living, has deep ties with the world of life and with the "Gospel of life" that Jesus came to proclaim. With her presence as a help and guide, may she continue to inspire and bless your progress!

As I cordially encourage you to continue your work, I impart a special Blessing to everyone, which I gladly extend to all who attend your Faculty of Educational Sciences.

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