The Holy See

MESSAGE HIS HOLYNESS POPE FRANCIS,
SIGNED BY CARDINAL SECRETARY OF STATE PIETRO PAROLIN,
ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY 2022

Ms. Audrey Azoulay
Director General of UNESCO
Paris

On the occasion of International Literacy Day 2022, His Holiness Pope Francis has entrusted me to convey his cordial greetings and his encouragement to all those within UNESCO who are working to promote literacy. He wishes every success in the reflections and work of this day, so that they bear good fruit for an effective and lasting *transformation of literacy learning spaces*.

Our world is in constant transformation; it is undergoing multiple crises. Pope Francis speaks about a metamorphosis, not only cultural but also anthropological, that generates new languages and rejects, without discernment, the paradigms that are offered to us by history [1].

Well, every change demands an educational path that involves everyone. For this reason, it is necessary to construct a “village of education” in which we share, in diversity, the commitment to creating a network of human and open relationships. There is an African proverb that says, “It takes a village to raise a child” [2]. In this sense, the Holy Father underlines that it is necessary to sign a pact that gives a soul to formal and informal educational processes, which cannot ignore that fact that everything is intimately connected in the world and that it is necessary to find, in accordance with a healthy anthropology, other ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth and progress. In a path of integral ecology, the specific value of each creature is put in its proper place, in relation to people and the reality that surrounds it, and a lifestyle is proposed that rejects the culture of waste [3].

In continuity with Pope John Paul II’s address to UNESCO on 2 June 1980, Pope Francis fervently hopes for an education and literacy whose main objective is to construct a world on a human

scale, the primordial and fundamental subject of education, who must be considered in his material, cultural and spiritual aspirations, as well as in his relationship with others, with the community, with nature and with his living environment.

The Pope exhorts us to find a global convergence in view of an education that is the bearer of an alliance between all the components of the person: between study and life, between the generations, and between teachers, students, families and civil society, according to their intellectual, scientific, artistic, sporting, political, entrepreneurial and solidarity-based expressions. An alliance between the inhabitants of the Earth and the “common home” that we must safeguard and respect. An alliance that generates peace, justice and acceptance among all the peoples of the human family, as well as dialogue between religions [4].

In this time of pandemic and war, the Holy Father reminds us that to educate is always an act of hope that invites us to share and to transform the sterile and paralysing logic of indifference into a logic capable of embracing our common kinship. If educational spaces today were to conform to the logic of substitution and repetition, incapable of generating and showing new horizons in which hospitality, intergenerational solidarity and the value of transcendence might find a new culture, would we not be missing the opportunity given by this historical moment? [5]

Studies and analyses of the impact of Covid-19 on adult learning and literacy seem to confirm that, in many countries, educators come mainly from sectors other than that of school teaching, and are community or volunteer teachers, who have precarious contractual status, which contributes to making this sector unattractive, in particular for young people who want to become teachers.

Expressing the hope that the reflections and efforts for the transformation of literacy learning spaces may contribute to building a civilization of harmony, unity, solidarity, brotherhood and lasting peace, the Holy Father invokes upon you, the member countries of UNESCO and the collaborators of the illustrious Organization of which you are Director General, the Blessings of the Most High.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin,

Secretary of State of His Holiness

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[1] Pope Francis, Message for the launch of the Global Compact on Education, 12 September 2019.

[2] Cf. *Ibid*.

[3] Cf. *Ibid*.

[4] Cf. *Ibidem*

[5] Pope Francis, *Video Message on the occasion of the Meeting organized by the Congregation for Catholic Education: "Global Compact on Education. Together to look beyond"*, 15 October 2020.

Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office, 8 September 2022

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