



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION
OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND
PROFESSIONAL UPDATING (CONFAP)**

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 3 May 2024*

[Multimedia]

Mr. Minister of Education, Mr. Valditara, dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I welcome all of you and greet in particular the President of CONFAP, the trainers, the educators and young people present, all of you who are an active part of the *professional education* bodies. Your Confederation is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, while we also remember the twenty-fifth of the Forma FP Association. And I would like to say thank you straight away, thank you, because your service, inspired by the social doctrine of the Church, is a contribution of vital importance for the society in which we live.

With your daily effort, you are an expression of the rich and variegated spirituality of various religious institutions, which have in their charism the *service to young people through professional formation*. These are cutting-edge training courses, which boast a high quality of methodologies, workshop experiences and didactic possibilities, so much so that they constitute a flagship in the panorama of training for work. And, more importantly, your training proposal is *integral*, because besides the quality of tools and teaching, you reserve care and special attention above all towards young people who find themselves on the margins of social and ecclesial life. Thank you for what you do; thank you to the trainers who devote themselves passionately to the young. And with this spirit of gratitude, I would like to offer you some reflections based on the three words that characterize your effort: youth, formation, and profession.

First of all, *young people*. There are many of you here! They are one of the most fragile categories of our time. The young, always filled with talents and potential, are also particularly vulnerable, because of both certain anthropological conditions and various cultural aspects of the time in which we live.

I allude not only to the NEET, those who are not in education, employment or training, but also to some social choices that expose them to the winds of dissipation and degradation. Indeed, many young people leave their places of origin to seek employment elsewhere, often not finding opportunities that live up to their dreams; some, then, intend to work but have to make do with precarious and underpaid contracts; others still, in this context of social fragility and exploitation, live in dissatisfaction and resign from work. Faced with these and other similar situations, we must all become aware of one thing: the abandonment of education and training is a tragedy! Hear me well, it is a tragedy. And, while it is necessary to promote legislation to favour the social recognition of young people, it is even more important to construct a generational change where the skills of those who are leaving the labour market are at the service of those who are entering. In other words, that adults share the dreams and desires of the young, they introduce them, they support them, they encourage them without judging them.

In this regard, I would like to say to you, who creatively dedicate your being as Christians in this field: do not lose sight of anyone, be attentive to the young, take care of those who have not had opportunities or come from socially disadvantaged situations. Not everyone has received the indispensable support of the family and the Christian community, and we are called to take responsibility for this, so that no-one can be left at the door, especially the poorest and most marginalized, who risk serious forms of exclusion, migrants included. Those who feel rejected can end up in forms of humanly degrading social malaise, and this we must not accept!

The second word is *training*, which indicates indispensable commitment to generating the future. The transformations of work are increasingly complex, also due to the new technologies and the development of artificial intelligence. And here we are called upon to repel two temptations: on the one hand, technophobia, or rather the fear of technology that leads to dismissing it; on the other, technocracy, the illusion that technology can solve all problems. Instead, it is a matter of investing resources and energies, because the transformation of work demands ongoing, creative and constantly updated training. At the same time, efforts must also be made to restore dignity to certain jobs, especially manual ones, which are still socially under-recognized.

Sound vocational training is an antidote to school drop-outs and a response to the demand for work in various sectors of the economy. But – you teach me this – good vocational training cannot be improvised. It requires a link with families, as with every type of educational experience; it takes a healthy and effective relationship with companies, willing to take on young people. These are two poles of reference for you, because along with technical skills, human virtues are important: technique without humanity becomes ambiguous, risky, and not truly human, it is not truly

formative. Training must offer young people the tools to discern between job opportunities and forms of exploitation.

The first word, *youth*. The second word, *training*. The third word, *profession*. Youth, training and profession. Our profession defines us. “What is your job?” we ask someone, to get to know them. “What is your name? What do you do?”: we present others through their work. This was also the case for Jesus, recognized as the “carpenter’s son” (*Mt* 13:55), or simply as “the carpenter” (*Mk* 6:3). And yet, today we are witnessing a debasement of the meaning of work, which is increasingly interpreted in relation to earning money rather than as an expression of one’s own dignity and contribution to the common good. Rather, it is important for training programmes to be at the service of the overall growth of the person, in his or her spiritual, cultural and work dimensions. “When we discover that God is calling us to something, that this or that is what we were made for – whether it be nursing, carpentry, communication, teaching, art or any other kind of work – then we will be able to summon up our best capacities for sacrifice, generosity and dedication. Knowing that we don’t do things just for the sake of doing them, but rather we endow them with meaning ... is what makes these occupations bring a sense of deep fulfilment” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 273).

Three words: youth, training, profession. Do not forget them! I encourage you to continue to have young people, training and profession at heart. And I thank you, because through your creativity you show that it is possible to combine work and a person’s vocation. Because a good professional training enables one to carry out a job and, at the same time, to discover the meaning of one’s being in the world and in society. I accompany you with prayer. I bless all of you and your families from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

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