



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MOVEMENT OF
EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT OF CATHOLIC ACTION**

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, 31 October 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I welcome you with pleasure on the occasion of the eleventh National Congress of the Catholic Action Educational Commitment Movement. I greet the president, the assistant, and all of you, and I thank you for the choice, never to be taken for granted, of being an association in the Church.

The educational service that defines your Movement brings with it, today perhaps even more than in the past, the challenge of working on a human and Christian level. To educate - as you well know and testify - means above all to rediscover and value the centrality of the person in a relational context where the dignity of human life finds fulfilment and adequate space to grow.

The formative project of Italian Catholic Action is structured according to an organic vision, systematic of the educational mission. Ever since the constitutive Assembly of 1990, when you took up the legacy of the Catholic Teachers' Movement, you have devoted yourselves to this task with creativity, with attention to the signs of the times and always allowing yourselves to be enlightened by the Gospel. You have advanced this educational activity by trying to remain well rooted in the territories, with a spirit of collaboration with the local Churches and with other Catholic lay entities.

In this epoch change, in the midst of the secularization process – which is clear, the spirit of this world can be seen clearly – educational activity finds itself immersed in an almost unprecedented

landscape. Christian education crosses unexplored terrains, marked by anthropological and cultural changes, about which we are still seeking answers in the light of the Word of God. In the meantime, we gather the positive experiences that many families transmit to us, that are transmitted to us by schools, parish communities, associations and pedagogy itself.

There are many urgent matters today, but one of these urgent matters is, to use an expression of yours, is to be “big-hearted educators ... in the labyrinths of complexity”. And do you know how you get out of a labyrinth? Never alone. Never. And secondly, from above. You come out of a labyrinth from above, and never alone. Think a little about this. [He repeats the preceding paragraph]. Christian education crosses unexplored terrains, marked by changes. In the meantime, we gather the positive experiences that many families transmit to us, that are transmitted to us by schools, parish communities, associations and pedagogy itself.

Big-hearted educators, for the good of the children, young people and adults who live beside you, you are called to broaden your heart – to broaden the heart – not to be afraid of proposing lofty ideals, without being discouraged in the face of difficulties. There are difficulties, many of them. And in order not to lose the thread in these “labyrinths of complexity”, it is important not to be alone, but to build and consolidate fruitful relationships with the various subjects of the educational process: namely, families, teachers, social animators, leaders and sports coaches, catechists, priests, and men and women religious, without neglecting collaboration with public institutions, and young people, because young people are part of this. They must not be passive in the educational process: they must be active.

In the Congress you are holding in these days, you have renewed your commitment to carry forward an idea and a practice of education that effectively places at the centre the person, his irreducible value and original dignity, so that he is always, and in every case, considered – the person – as the end and never reduced to a means, for any reason. An education, as your project states, “that helps to return within oneself, to cultivate interiority, transcendence, spirituality, as essential elements for the integral development of the human person in all his or her dimensions: the spiritual, existential, affective, cultural, social and political dimensions”. This is precisely the right perspective in which to pursue the path of your Movement. And keep going! Do not be discouraged.

Looking, then, to the upcoming Jubilee, a time for sowing hope – because we all have a vital need for hope – I would like to leave you one last piece of advice: reserve special attention to children, teenagers, young people. We must look at them with confidence, empathy, I would like to say with the outlook and heart of Jesus. They are the present and the future of the world and of the Church. We have the task – entirely educational – of accompanying them, supporting them, encouraging them, and, by our witness, of showing them the good path that leads to being “Fratelli tutti”, all brothers.

Those who love, educate: do not forget this. *Those who love, educate* was the title of a book promoted by Catholic Action a few years ago: it is an intelligent criterion, full of hope, to keep in mind in all of your activities. Through educational processes we express our love for others, for those who are close or who are entrusted to us; and, at the same time, it is essential that education be based, in its methods or in its aims, on love. Without love, one cannot educate. One cannot educate. Always educate with love!

I entrust you to the intercession of the Venerable Giuseppe Lazzati, credible teacher and witness, a model of the Christian educator to be inspired by.

Thank you for your visit! I bless you from my heart. And I ask you please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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