



The Holy See

*LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF UNESCO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD LITERACY DAY 1984**

The annual Literacy Day offers me a glad occasion to repeat to you how much I appreciate the action of your organization in the field of literacy, which represents a major factor in the promotion of mankind and in the development of peoples. Especially since the Conference of Teheran in 1965, it is thanks to UNESCO above all that public opinion has become aware of the seriousness of the problem of literacy.

UNESCO has played a role of primary importance in the development of studies, experiences and exchanges on the conditions and methods of literacy. It has thus enabled what could have been only a wish without results to be translated into effective action. In this regard, one could not insist too much on the indispensable continuation of the literacy campaign, without which it runs the risk of being ephemeral, especially, for example, the production of books and the promotion of reading among the newly literate. I particularly esteem the action of UNESCO in favour of a literacy drive which, while responding to economic and practical needs, looks fundamentally to the promotion and development of man on the level of his spiritual vocation.

It is my heartfelt wish that this dynamic action will continue in 1985, in favour of the International Year of Youth, on one hand, and the World Conference of Nairobi, which will end the Decade of Woman, on the other hand. Isn't it especially these two categories - youth, particularly those who have never benefited from school or who have been too little educated, and women - who represent a very great number of illiterates? However, these two essential sectors should not make us forget that there exist many other persons, more or less aged and above all in rural environments, who should equally be made the object of literacy efforts in an adequate manner.

Be assured, Mr. Director General, of the very important place that literacy continues to hold in the preoccupations of the Church. The many and very diversified successes of this humanitarian work also particularly motivate my support.

I invoke on all those who dedicate themselves entirely or devote the time they can spare to this expansion of human culture among the most deprived peoples and individuals, the light and the strength of God Almighty.

From the Vatican, 29 August 1984

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