

How to face a crisis?

Reflections of the Pope in a speech on the Education Pact

(ZENIT News / Vatican City, 01.06.2022) - On the morning of Wednesday 1 June, before the general audience in Paul VI Hall, the Pope received in a special audience the participants in a Congress entitled "The Development of the Global Education Pact". The Congress was sponsored by the Congregation for Catholic Education. We offer the Spanish translation of the Pope's speech. A new expression has entered the "Bergoglian" vocabulary today: "indietrism". He himself explains it in point four of this thematic division that we have made from ZENIT.



Introduction

I welcome the distinguished rectors, professors and participants to the International Conference "Development Guidelines of the Global Compact for Education". I thank Cardinal Versaldi for his introductory remarks. It is a "full orchestra" finale, because now the dicasteries will be merged. Thank you, thank you for this full orchestra finale.

I am glad that the proposal launched in 2019 for a Global Compact on Education is gaining attention from many quarters, and that universities are also collaborating. They are doing so through in-depth studies on various themes, such as human dignity and human rights, fraternity and cooperation, technology and integral ecology, peace and citizenship, cultures and religions. This Conference of yours is the time to evaluate the work done so far and to plan the development of the Education Pact for the coming years. It must progress and move forward, not remain closed.

Learning to live through the crisis and helping others learn to live through the crisis

I recently met with the rectors of the universities of Lazio. With them I recalled how in these times we must learn with the young students of our universities to live the crisis and overcome it together. We must learn ourselves and help others to learn to live through crises, because crises are an opportunity to grow. We must manage crises and prevent them from turning into conflicts. Crises push you upwards, they make you grow; conflict closes you down, it is an alternative, an alternative without a solution. Be informed about the crisis: this is very important. In this way, it - the crisis - can become a *kairos*, an opportune moment to take new paths.

How to face a crisis: the Aeneas model

An emblematic model of how to deal with crisis is offered by the mythological figure of Aeneas, who, in the midst of the flames of the burning city, carries his aged father Anchises on his shoulders and takes his young son Ascanius by the hand, bringing them both to safety. This is beautiful: " ...et sublato patre montem petivi" ["cesa, et sublato montem parent petivi" (Aeneid, II, 804)]. Thus a crisis is overcome. Aeneas is not saved alone, but with the father who represents his history and with the son who is his future. And so he continues.

This figure can be significant for the mission of educators, who are called to guard the past - the father on their shoulders - and to accompany the young steps of the future. It also allows us to recall some fundamental principles of the global educational pact.

Some fundamental principles: the centrality of the person

Firstly, the centrality of the person. On leaving Troy, Aeneas takes with him no goods, no things - apart from the idols of Penates - but only his father and his son. The roots and the future, the promises. This reminds us that in any educational process we must always put people at the centre and aim at the essential, everything else is secondary. But never leave behind the roots and the hope for the future.

Some key principles: investing the best energies with creativity and responsibility

Another key element is to invest the best energies with creativity and responsibility. The old man Anchises represents tradition, which must be respected and preserved. I am reminded of what Gustav Mahler said about tradition: "Tradition is the guarantee of the future", not a museum piece. Ascanius represents the tomorrow that must be guaranteed; Aeneas is the one who acts as a "bridge", the one who ensures the passage and the relationship between generations. Education is indeed always rooted in the past, but it does not stop there: it aims at "long-term planning", where the old and the new come together in the composition of a new humanism. And against this, there is the fashion - in all centuries, but in this century in the life of the Church I see it as dangerous - that instead of starting from the roots to go forward - that sense of the beautiful traditions - there is an "indietrism", not "from below and above", but backwards. This indietrism that turns us into a sect, that closes you off, that takes away your horizons: they call themselves custodians of traditions, but of dead traditions. The true Catholic, Christian and human tradition is what that theologian [St. Vincent de Lerins] - 5th century - described as a continuous growth, that is to say, throughout history tradition grows, advances: "ut annis consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate". This is the true tradition, which is continued by your children.

Some fundamental principles: educating in service

Nor should we forget that it is fundamental to educate in service. Anchises and Ascanius, as well as representing tradition and the future, are also symbols of the fragile segments of society that must be defended, rejecting the temptation to discard and marginalise. The throwaway culture would have us believe that when something no longer works well it should be thrown away and replaced. This is how it is done with consumer goods and, unfortunately, this has become a mentality and we end up doing the same with people. For example, if a marriage no longer works, you change it; if a friendship is no longer good, you cut it off; if an old person is no longer autonomous, you discard him or her... On the other hand, fragility is synonymous with preciousness: the old and the young are like delicate vases that must be carefully guarded. Both are fragile.

Users and consumers

Dear friends, in these times of ours, in which technicism and consumerism tend to turn us into users and consumers, the crisis can become a propitious moment to evangelise anew the meaning of man, of life, of the world; to recover the centrality of the person as a creature who in Christ is the image and likeness of the Creator. This is the great truth of which we are the bearers and which we have the duty to witness to and transmit also in our educational institutions. "We cannot silence the new generations about the truths that give meaning to life"[3]. To silence the truths about God out of respect for those who do not believe would be, in the field of education, like burning books out of respect for those who do not think, erasing works of art out of respect for those who do not see, or music out of respect for those who do not hear. Thank you.

Thank you for your work in the service of education, which is also the specific contribution you make to the synodal process of the Church. Go forward in this line from the past to the future, of continuous growth. Children and the elderly, all ahead of you. And beware of "indietrism", which is the fashion of today, which makes us believe that going backwards preserves humanism. I encourage you to go forward and accompany you with my blessing. And please don't forget to pray for me. Thank you.