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What is the Global Compact on Education?

On 12 September 2019, Pope Francis launched an «invitation to dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet and the need to employ the talents of all, since all change requires an educational process aimed at developing a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society».

To this end, he endorsed a **Global Compact on Education** «to rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding».

We must «unite our efforts in a broad *educational alliance*, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity».



Message of his holiness Pope Francis for the launch of the Global Compact on Education

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In my Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, I invited everyone to cooperate in caring for our common home and to confront together the challenges that we face. Now, a few years later, I renew my invitation to dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet and the need to employ the talents of all, since all change requires an educational process aimed at developing a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society.

To this end, I wish to endorse a global event, to take place on 14 May 2020 on the theme Reinventing the Global Compact on Education. This meeting will rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding. Never before has there been such need to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity.

Today's world is constantly changing and faces a variety of crises. We are experiencing an era of change: a transformation that is not only cultural but also anthropological, creating a new semantics while indiscriminately discarding traditional paradigms. Education clashes with what has been called a process of "rapidification" that traps our existence in a whirlwind of high-speed technology and computerization, continually altering our points of reference. As a result, our very identity loses its solidity and our psychological structure dissolves in the face of constant change that "contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution" (*Laudato Si'*, 18).

Every change calls for an educational process that involves everyone. There is thus a need to create an “educational village”, in which all people, according to their respective roles, share the task of forming a network of open, human relationships. According to an African proverb, “it takes a whole village to educate a child”. We have to create such a village before we can educate. In the first place, the ground must be cleared of discrimination and fraternity must be allowed to flourish, as I stated in the Document that I signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar on 4 February this year in Abu Dhabi.

In this kind of village it is easier to find global agreement about an education that integrates and respects all aspects of the person, uniting studies and everyday life, teachers, students and their families, and civil society in its intellectual, scientific, artistic, athletic, political, business and charitable dimensions. An alliance, in other words, between the earth’s inhabitants and our “common home”, which we are bound to care for and respect. An alliance that generates peace, justice and hospitality among all peoples of the human family, as well as dialogue between religions.

To reach these global objectives, our shared journey as an “educating village” must take important steps forward. First, we must have the courage to place the human person at the centre. To do so, we must agree to promote formal and informal educational processes that cannot ignore the fact that the whole world is deeply interconnected, and that we need to find other ways, based on a sound anthropology, of envisioning economics, politics, growth and progress. In the development of a integral ecology, a central place must be given to the value proper to each creature in its relationship to the people and realities surrounding it, as well as a lifestyle that rejects the throw-away culture.

Another step is to find the courage to capitalize on our best energies, creatively and responsibly. To be proactive and confident in opening education to a long-term vision unfettered by the status quo. This will result in men and women who are open, responsible, prepared to listen, dialogue and reflect with others, and capable of weaving relationships with families, between generations, and with civil society, and thus to create a new humanism.

A further step is the courage to train individuals who are ready to offer themselves in service to the community. Service is a pillar of the culture of encounter: “It means bending over those in need and stretching out a hand to them, without calculation, without fear, but with tenderness and understanding, just as Jesus knelt to wash the Apostles’ feet. Serving means working beside the neediest of people, establishing with them first and foremost human relationships of closeness and bonds of solidarity”. In serving others, we experience that there is more joy in giving than in receiving (cf. Acts 20:35). In this regard, all institutions must be open to examining the aims and methods that determine how they carry out their educational mission.

For this reason, I look forward to meeting in Rome all of you who, in various ways and on every level, work in the field of education and of research. I encourage you to work together to promote, through a global compact on education, those forward-looking initiatives that can give direction to history and change it for the better. I join you in appealing to authoritative public figures in our world who are concerned for the future of our young people, and I trust that they will respond to my invitation. I also call upon you, dear young people, to take part in the meeting and to sense your real responsibility for the building of a better world. [...] A number of seminars on related topics will take place in various locations and help us prepare for this event.

Let us seek solutions together, boldly undertake processes of change and look to the future with hope. I invite everyone to work for this alliance and to be committed, individually and within our communities, to nurturing the dream of a humanism rooted in solidarity and responsive both to humanity’s aspirations and to God’s plan.

I look forward to seeing you. Until then, I send you my greetings and my blessing.

Franciscus

From the Vatican, 12 September 2019.

Welcome address

of His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi

PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION



Dear educators,

There is an urgent need to humanise education, focusing on the centrality of the person and creating the necessary conditions for an integral development. Giving children and young people a proper autonomy and the necessary leadership will make it possible for each one to grow inwardly, as part of a living, interdependent, and fraternal community. In sharing a common destiny, the complexity of reality will be interpreted through a new pact on education, leading us to rediscover the beauty of humanism inspired by the Gospel.

In a context of difficulty and polarisation, we as adults need to take a step back, talk less and listen more to the needs of young people in order to allow their individual talents to manifest themselves and flourish freely. Herein lies the true meaning of inclusion, which “is an integral part of the Christian salvific message” (Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education, 20 February 2020). Educating is much more than teaching.

In a process that is as delicate as it is articulated, shared projects for change can be developed to concretely transform real contexts. Let’s trust them, with no fear... They will surprise us!

+ *Giuseppe Versaldi*

Introduction

of His Excellency Mgr. Vincenzo Zani

SECRETARY OF THE CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION



This Vademecum is a handbook for implementing the Compact on Education and is intended above all for educators who must guide children and young people, through educational and extracurricular, formal and informal courses, in building our common home.

For some time, Pope Francis has been insisting on the need to invest everyone's talents to bring about a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society. In his many messages, especially the one on 15 October 2020, he renewed the invitation to make a pact on education that would allow us to find global consensus for an education that is able to create an alliance among all human dimensions. Between school and life; among generations; among teachers, students, families, and civil society with all its intellectual, scientific, artistic, sporting, political, entrepreneurial, and solidarity-based expressions in support of the younger generations.

In the face of the 'educational catastrophe' caused by the pandemic, which has exacerbated an already alarming educational gap, simplistic solutions are not enough. To educate is to challenge and give hope to the present that breaks determinism and fatalism; to educate is always an act of hope that calls for co-participation and the transformation of the logic of indifference into a culture of encounter and inclusion.

Education must help us to build a future that is no longer marked by division, by the impoverishment of thinking and imagination, but one based on listening, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

The Vademecum takes up the seven commitments indicated by Pope Francis. Each of them can become an educational path to be developed through reflection, the development of projects responding to the various local challenges and their concrete implementation. Stories and personal and community experiences may emerge, capable of inspiring others to share them and thus embark on a process of change, inspired by the culture of care, integral ecology, and the building of fraternity and peace. Such experiences may be collected by the Commissions of the Bishops' Conferences and submitted to LUMSA University (eis.ricerca@lumsa.it).

It is necessary to trust and invest in the potential of young people to help them look ahead with confidence together.

+ *Angelo Vincenzo Zani*

1 To make human persons the centre

To make human persons the centre of every educational programme, in order to foster their distinctiveness and their capacity for relationship with others against the spread of the throwaway culture.



2 To listen to the voices of children and young people

To listen to the voices of children and young people in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.



3 To advance the women

To encourage the full participation of girls and young women in education.



4 To empower the family

To consider the family as the first and essential place of education.



5 To welcome

To educate and be educated on the need for acceptance and in particular, openness to the most vulnerable and marginalized.



6 To find new ways of understanding economy and politics

To be committed to finding new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth, and progress that can truly stand at the service of the human person and the entire human family, within the context of an integral ecology.



7 To safeguard our common home

To safeguard and cultivate our common home, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources and to adopt a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment.



1

To make human persons the centre

To make human persons the centre of every educational programme, in order to foster their distinctiveness and their capacity for relationship with others against the spread of the throwaway culture

Ideas for reflection

The first commitment highlights the need to base every educational action on a solid anthropological foundation, a sound and precise vision of the person. Pope Francis says that every change needs an educational journey, to rebuild the fabric of relationships, bring to maturity a new universal solidarity, and give life to a more welcoming society. To this end, it is necessary to form a new humanism to overcome the cultural and anthropological metamorphosis of today's society. This makes it possible to give substance to each person's identity, taking care of all its dimensions, consolidating its psychological structure, thus preventing it from fragmenting and disintegrating in the face of incessant and rapid change.



Values

1. Respect for and enhancement of each person's identity, without discrimination of gender, age, race, religion, ideology, social status, and others.
2. Education for an integral formation that values all human dimensions.
3. Protection of the universal and inalienable rights of every person.

Suggestions for Educators

- Create the conditions so that all members of institutions/organisations have access to and knowledge of the Charter of Universal Human Rights.
- Guarantee equal opportunities for the members of your institution/organisation, without discrimination of gender, age, race, religion, ideology, and social status.
- To take care of each member of your institution/organisation, with special attention to the most fragile, offering an integral formation that values all the dimensions of the human person, including the spiritual one.

To listen to the voices of children and young people

To listen to the voices of children and young people in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.

Ideas for reflection

This commitment draws attention to the need to adopt a pedagogical paradigm based on attentive and respectful listening and dialogue with the younger generations. The Pope uses three verbs: *listen*, *pass on*, and *build together*. It is always necessary to start by listening to every person, welcoming their questions, their needs, their wounds, their poverty; discovering their talents, knowing their dreams, their ideals, etc. Before “giving instructions”, we need to “*e-ducere*”, i.e. to educate, to bring out, to bring to light, to prepare the good soil, preparing it to welcome the seed of knowledge. However, as the Pope writes, this can be done by passing on and sharing the values, that is the life, the style of existence; only afterwards is knowledge communicated, which makes it possible to understand and appreciate these values. Moreover, the process is like a construction, a building together, and this highlights the value of the relationship and the community in which we grow together



Values

1. Listening to children, adolescents and young people in order to put them at the centre of educational action, with specific focus on those with special educational needs (“it is not the pupils who have to adapt to the school, but the school that has to adapt to the pupils”).
2. Every child, adolescent and young person has the right to the utmost respect and quality education.
3. Construction of a participatory educational milieu that involves mind, hands, and heart (“It takes a whole village to educate a child”).

Suggestions for Educators

- Promote the empowerment of students and young people and their access to education.
- Ensure the participation of students’ representatives in the advisory and decision-making bodies of their institution/organisation.
- Create welcoming educational communities with a particular focus on students with special educational needs.
- Condemn all forms of disrespect and exploitation of minors.

3

To advance the women

To encourage the full participation of girls and women in education.

Ideas for reflection

Special attention is to be paid to young girls and women, who are often marginalised by education and society. This is a priority and a strategic choice.

In the Encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* (no.23), Pope Francis writes, “The organization of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with words, but our decisions and reality tell another story. Indeed, doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment, and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights.”



Values

1. Recognition of the same rights, dignity, and equality between men and women
2. Greater participation of girls in education, through concrete inclusion policies.
3. Equitable inclusion of women in statutory decision-making bodies.

Suggestions for Educators

- Ensure as far as possible an equal presence of men and women in your institution/organisation.
- Encourage policies in favour of girls' participation in education.
- Guarantee the equal participation of women in the management, teaching, and governing bodies of their institution/organisation.
- Condemn all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

4

To empower the family

To consider the family as the first and essential place of education.

Ideas for reflection

Another commitment is the family, which is the primary and principal educator. It is the fundamental unit of society and as such it must be able to fulfil its task as the source of generative and constitutive relationships for the human person, to which all the other actors must contribute. In *Gravissimum educationis* it is stated that parents are the primary and principal educators of their children. "This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking." Then, "the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society need [...] particularly in the Christian family [...] children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God, to worship Him, and to love their neighbour." (n.3)



Values

1. Priority of the family in the education of children.
2. Participation of the representatives of parents in decision-making bodies.
3. Promotion of family-friendly policies, especially for the most socio-economically disadvantaged families.

Suggestions for Educators

- Always involve the families in the educational activities of your school/organisation.
- Ensure the presence of the representatives of parents in the advisory and decision-making bodies of your school/organisation.
- Build community educational pacts between schools and the families, to meet local needs.
- Encourage parents' training and self-training.

To welcome

To educate and be educated on the need for acceptance and in particular, openness to the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Ideas for reflection

In a globalised world, general equality has not been achieved, but many forms of social, economic, and cultural imbalances have become more pronounced. Alongside citizens who have adequate means for personal and family development, there are a great many 'non-citizens', 'citizens non-citizens', "half-citizens" or "urban remnants", i.e. the excluded (cfr. *Evangelii gaudium* 74).

A society is healthy when it knows how to welcome the most vulnerable persons, when it takes care of the excluded so that they become full citizens. A compact on education must therefore aim at welcoming the last, at the culture of inclusion, at cultivating everyone's attention to the social and existential peripheries, and at healing the deepest wounds of the human person and society.



Values

1. Education to openness and encounter with the other.
2. Welcoming and integration of vulnerable and marginalised people through inclusion policies.
3. Overcoming the throwaway culture through inclusion projects.

Suggestions for educators

- Promote awareness programmes in an intercultural and interreligious perspective.
- Welcome students and people from other countries into your institution/ organisation (internationalisation).
- Launch international cooperation programmes aimed at building a more fraternal and welcoming world.

To find new ways of understanding economy and politics

To be committed to finding new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth, and progress that can truly stand at the service of the human person and the entire human family, within the context of an integral ecology.

Ideas for reflection

This commitment sums up many aspects.

Economy, politics, growth, and progress are all part of a way of life, a culture in which education must aim to form men and women capable of being protagonists of the common good. In order to be able to do this it is essential to spread a culture of encounter, seeking points of contact, building bridges, and planning a project that includes everyone (cfr. *Fratelli tutti* 216). This implies educating the ability to recognise the right of others to be themselves and to be different. Within this lifestyle of values and culture, a “social covenant” must be active and effective and demand realizing that some things may have to be renounced for the sake of common good (cfr. no.221). Education must, therefore, help to live the value of respect; it must teach “a love capable of welcoming differences, and the priority of the dignity of every human being over his or her ideas, opinions, and practices” (no.191).



Values

1. A renewed idea of economy, politics, growth, and progress in the perspective of inclusion.
2. Sustainable development and commitment to building the common good through a “social covenant”.
3. Investing one’s best energies in education at the service of the community.

Suggestions for Educators

- Encourage study and research on economics, politics, growth, and progress in your institution/organisation with innovative and inclusive ideas, revising curricula and courses of study.
- Propose an integral education at the service of the values of participation, democracy, politics, justice, equality, fraternity, and peace.
- Redefine the training projects of your institution/organisation in favour of training people who are willing to serve the community.

To safeguard our common home

To safeguard and cultivate our common home, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources and adopting a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment.

Ideas for reflection

The last commitment indicated by Pope Francis clearly refers to the encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, which highlights the global dimension of the current crisis. It is not only an 'environmental' crisis, or an economic, financial, political, or social crisis. It is a crisis without any adjectives, because it is an inner crisis, projected outwards in all the dimensions of the human being – in the relationship with others, with society, with things, and with the environment. What is at stake then, is of an existential order, it concerns the position that human beings assign to themselves, the way in which they perceive their own existence in the world. This is why the Pope, already in the first message launching the Compact on Education (12-09-2019), renewed the invitation to dialogue on the way in which we are building the common home and the future of the planet. The answer lies in the need to invest the talents of all, because every change needs an educational journey to develop a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society.



Values

1. Education to respect and care for the common home and to more sober and environmentally friendly lifestyles.
2. Investment in renewable energies
3. Save and promote green spaces in one's own geographical area and educational centres.

Suggestions for Educators

- Encourage environmentally friendly activities in your organisation.
- Develop a care for the common home and refine the ability to lead the heart to beauty in the face of the wonders of creation.
- Facilitate the conversion to renewable energies for your institution/organisation energy supply.
- Create green spaces in your educational centres in proportion to the number of members of your institution/organisation.

Thematic areas for research

For an idea of the university

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has repeatedly met with the university world, especially with Catholic universities. The Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* recalls that the Catholic University was born from the heart of the Church and goes back historically to the very origin of the university as an institution.

In the construction of the Global Educational Village, universities are required to carry out scientific research in the five thematic areas that are the cornerstones of Pope Francis' idea of the university.

Here are the thematic areas and the universities of reference with which other universities can collaborate in order to outline joint initiatives and research paths and combine their contributions.

1. Dignity and human rights.

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | University of Notre Dame (USA).

2. Fraternity and cooperation.

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Italy).

3. Technology and integral ecology.

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Pontifical Javeriana University (Colombia)

4. Peace and citizenship.

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Pontifical Lateran University

5. Cultures and religions.

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Pontifical Saint Thomas University (Philippines)

1. Dignity and human rights

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | University of Notre Dame (USA)



The University's mission is to defend the dignity and rights of the human person

In *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II, in defining the identity and mission of the Catholic University, indicates the objective of protecting and developing human dignity. "Every Catholic University, *as a university*, is an academic community which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching, and various services offered to the local, national, and international communities" (No.12).

Pope Francis also emphasises the university's mission to promote full and authentic human life. To the delegation from the "University of Notre Dame" on the occasion of the inauguration of their campus in Rome, the Holy Father recalls the dimension of "missionary discipleship" of Catholic universities "which by their very nature are committed to demonstrating the harmony of faith and reason and the relevance of the Christian message for a full and authentically human life."

Likewise addressing the students and academics of the University of Bologna (1-10-2017), Pope Francis recalls the university's mission to defend the rights of people, especially the weakest. "The university arose here for the study of law, in search of what defends people, regulates common life, and protects against the logic of the strongest, violence, and arbitrariness. It is a current challenge: to affirm the rights of persons and peoples, the weakest, the excluded, and of creation, our common home."

The encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, a compendium of Pope Francis' social doctrine, defends "equal rights based on equal human dignity" (no.22). "Differences of colour, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all" (no.118). In particular, there is an appeal to respect the rights of migrants (no.40), the weakest, and women because "it is unacceptable that some have fewer rights by virtue of being women" (no.121).

To ensure that rights are respected, the role of the Charter of the United Nations "is an obligatory reference point of justice and a channel of peace" (no.257).

Therefore, "there is need to prevent this Organization from being delegitimized" (no.173).

2. Fraternity and cooperation

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Italy)



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

University as a place for building fraternity between peoples, dialogue, and solidarity

In the meeting with the academic and the cultural milieu (22-09-2013), Pope Francis refers to “University as a place where the culture of closeness develops, [...] culture of closeness. [...] The university is a privileged place where this culture of dialogue is promoted, taught and lived, this culture which does not indiscriminately level out differences and plurality – this is one of the risks of globalization – nor does it take them to the extreme, causing them to become causes of conflict. Rather, it opens to constructive dialogue. This means understanding and esteeming someone else’s riches; it means not seeing him with indifference or fear, but as an opportunity for growth. [...] The university as a place of formation in solidarity. [...] Solidarity, then, as a way of making history, as a vital context in which conflicts, tensions, and even those who oppose one another attain a harmony that generates life.”

“Everything is related to everything, everything is created to be a living icon of God who is the Trinity of Love! Today, therefore, it is a priority task to educate people to live this pact, indeed to make this pact alive in all these dimensions: to open the roads of the future to a new civilisation that embraces humanity and the cosmos in universal brotherhood. This vocation to fraternity, this living in brotherhood today is indispensable, we cannot walk without it.”

3. Technology and integral ecology

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Pontifical Javeriana University (Colombia)



Pontificia Universidad
JAVERIANA
Bogotá

Technology at the service of the common good and technology

To a delegation from Tel Aviv University (23-10-2017), Pope Francis said, “Universities are challenged to foster a culture of wisdom, one capable of harmonizing technical and scientific research with a humanistic approach, in the conviction that the pursuit of the true and the good is ultimately one.”

In addressing the educators (7-7-2015) the Pope said, “Creation is a gift to be shared. It is the space that God gives us to build with one another, to build a “we”. The world, history, all of time – this is the setting in which we build this “we” with God, with others, with the earth. [...] As Genesis recounts, after the word “cultivate”, another word immediately follows, “care”. Each explains the other. They go hand in hand. Those who do not cultivate do not care; those who do not care do not cultivate.”

In recalling *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis said, “There is a relationship between our life and the life of mother earth, between the way we live and the gift we have received from God.

The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.”

At Sophia University in Tokyo (26-11-2019), following along the lines of *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis said that love for nature, the concern for the protection of earth, our common home “can join in the promotion of a new ‘episteme’ that can provide a broader vision as opposed to the reductionism born of the technocratic paradigm” (see Nos. 106-114). Let us not forget that “an authentic humanity, calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door. Will the promise last, in spite of everything, with all that is authentic rising up in stubborn resistance?” He finally encouraged the university to put great technological advances “at the service of a more humane, more just, and ecologically responsible education.”

Pope Francis has handed over to humanity the thinking of the Church on ecology and environmental protection in the encyclical *Laudato si'* in order “to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development” (no.13).

4. Peace and citizenship

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Pontifical Lateran University



A university that is not neutral, but stands for peace

Pope Francis in his meeting with students and the milieu of university (Bologna 1-10-2017) recalled Benedict XV's courageous decision to go against the “reasons for war” by qualifying the war as “a useless slaughter”. Starting from the principle of “repudiating war,” he invites “to undertake paths of nonviolence and paths of justice, which favour peace. Because in the face of peace we cannot remain indifferent or neutral. [...] Not neutral, but aligned for peace!”

Then, in reference to Europe, he said, “I dream of a ‘university and mother’ Europe that, mindful of its culture, instils hope in its children and is an instrument of peace for the world.”

In his address to the Pontifical Lateran University, the Holy Father stated that “peace, human dignity, inclusion, and participation highlight the need for a broad educational pact capable of transmitting not only knowledge of technical content, but also and above all human and spiritual wisdom, made up of justice, rectitude, virtuous behaviour and capable of being put into practice. [...] Faced with the lack of peace, it is not enough to invoke freedom from war, proclaim rights or even use authority in its various forms. Above all, it is necessary to question ourselves, to recover the capacity to be among people, to dialogue with them and understand their needs, even with our weakness, which is the most authentic way to be welcomed when we speak of peace.” And he concluded by recalling Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran who “made us understand that it is not enough to work on what brings us together, it is necessary to explore new possibilities so that the different religious traditions can convey not only a message of peace, but also peace as a message.”

5. Cultures and religions

UNIVERSITY OF REFERENCE | Pontifical Saint Thomas University (Philippines)



University as a place of interreligious and intercultural exchange.

In his address to Roma Tre University (17-02-2017) Pope Francis said, “the University can also be the setting that fosters a culture of encounter and welcome for people from different cultural and religious traditions. A culture is strengthened by its openness and its exchange of views with other cultures, as long as it has a clear and mature awareness of its own principles and values. I therefore encourage professors and students to experience the University as an environment of true dialogue, which neither flattens nor intensifies diversity, but opens to constructive comparison. We are called to understand and appreciate the values of others, overcoming the temptation of indifference and fear. Never be afraid of encounter, of dialogue, of debate.”

To participants in the meeting sponsored by the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic studies (24-01-2015), the Holy Father said, “Culture and education are in no way secondary to a true process of approaching the other which respects in each person their life, their physical integrity, their dignity and the rights deriving from that dignity, their reputation, their property, their ethnic and cultural identity, their ideas, and their political choices.”

Chapter VIII of the encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* is devoted to the religions at the service of fraternity in the world. “The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society” (no.271). They are therefore entitled to a proper place in the public debate: “It is wrong when the only voices to be heard in public debate are those of the powerful and ‘experts’. Room needs to be made for reflections born of religious traditions that are the repository of centuries of experience and wisdom” (no.275).

Coordinating university

LUMSA University



The LUMSA University, in connection with the Committee for the Global Compact on Education, will play the role of coordinator of the five universities in charge, monitoring the projects and initiatives that they will plan with the partner universities.

The results of this research will be collected and published on the website of the Congregation for Catholic Education: www.educationglobalcompact.org

Networking...

- The call to join efforts in a broad educational covenant has started a journey guided by seven commitments and five areas of research in order to train mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentation and opposition and building a network of relationships for a more fraternal humanity.
- This journey offers the opportunity to give life to innovative and creative educational projects that enhance local cultures, build intergenerational bridges and take care of the environmental and existential peripheries.
- To support this journey, we invite you to share your projects and achievements through communication and cooperation networks.

And... experience sharing

The experiences and the results achieved can be shared in a network with other institutes/organisations and sent to the Commission for the Global Compact on Education of your own Bishops' Conference and to LUMSA University: eis.ricerca@lumsa.it



A logo for the Compact

Colours: **green** recalls nature, growth, renewal but also hope, the possibility of "sowing" prophetic dreams. **Blue** recalls our spiritual dimension and what we would like to help achieve: peace. **Gold** represents light, the sacred, because every pact, every alliance for the common good, for the good of humanity, has something sacred in it.

Shapes: The **world** embraced with care by a **human figure** who wants to protect and guard it. The circle line symbolises the macrocosm that is **God**, the beginning and the end of everything.

For further information on the [Global Compact on Education](https://www.educationglobalcompact.org)

www.educationglobalcompact.org | info@educationglobalcompact.org

ANNEX NO 1

Video message of his holiness Pope Francis on the Global Compact on Education (15-10-2020)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I invited you to begin this process of preparation, consultation and planning for a global pact on education, we could never have imagined the situation that has developed in the meantime. The Covid crisis has accelerated and magnified many of the issues and needs that we had identified, and has uncovered numerous others as well. Concerns about health care are now accompanied by economic and social concerns. Educational systems worldwide have felt the effects of the pandemic at every level.

Attempts have been made everywhere to offer a rapid response through online educational platforms. These have brought to light a marked disparity in educational and technological opportunities, but they have also made us realize that, due to the lockdown and many other already existing needs, large numbers of children and adolescents have fallen behind in the natural process of schooling. Recent statistics from international agencies have led some to speak, perhaps somewhat hastily, of an “educational catastrophe”, inasmuch as some ten million children were forced to leave school as a result of the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus. This has only increased an already alarming gap (with over 250 million school age children excluded from all educational activities).

Faced with this dramatic situation, we know that necessary health care measures will prove inadequate unless accompanied by a new cultural model. We have become more conscious of the need to change our model of development. In order to ensure that the dignity of the human person is respected and protected, development ought to start from the opportunity that global interdependence offers to communities and peoples to care for our common home and to foster peace. We are experiencing a comprehensive crisis that cannot be reduced or limited to any single sector. It affects everything. The pandemic has led us to realize that what is really in crisis is our way of understanding reality and of relating to one another.

Here it is evident that neither simplistic solutions nor wishful thinking will do. Education, as we know, is meant to be transformative. To educate is to take a risk and to hold out to the present a hope that can shatter the determinism and fatalism that the selfishness of the strong, the conformism of the weak and the ideology of the utopians would convince us is the only way forward.

To educate is always an act of hope, one that calls for cooperation in turning a barren and paralyzing indifference into another way of thinking that recognizes our interdependence. If our educational systems are presently marked by a mindset of replacement and repetition, and are incapable of opening up new horizons in which hospitality, intergenerational solidarity and the value of transcendence can give birth to a new culture, would this not signify that we are failing to take advantage of the opportunity offered by this historic moment?

We also know that the journey of life calls for hope grounded in solidarity. All change requires a process of education in order to create new paradigms capable of responding to the challenges and problems of the contemporary world, of understanding and finding solutions to the needs of every generation, and in this way contributing to the flourishing of humanity now and in the future.

We consider education to be one of the most effective ways of making our world and history more human. Education is above all a matter of love and responsibility handed down from one generation to another.

As such, education is a natural antidote to the individualistic culture that at times degenerates into a true cult of the self and the primacy of indifference. Our future cannot be one of division, impoverishment of thought, imagination, attentiveness, dialogue and mutual understanding. That cannot be our future.

Today, there is need for a renewed commitment to an education that engages society at every level. Let us heed the plea of the young, which opens our eyes to both the urgent need and the exciting opportunity of a renewed kind of education that is not tempted to look the other way and thus favour grave social injustices, violations of rights, terrible forms of poverty and the waste of human lives.

What is called for is an integral process that responds to those situations of loneliness and uncertainty about the future that affect young people and generate depression, addiction, aggressiveness, verbal hatred and bullying. This entails a shared journey that is not indifferent to the scourge of violence, the abuse of minors, the phenomenon of child marriage and child soldiers, the tragedy of children sold into slavery. To say nothing of the “sufferings” endured by our planet as a result of a senseless and heartless exploitation that has led to a grave environmental and climatic crisis.

At certain moments in history, it is necessary to make radical decisions that can shape not only our way of life but above all our stance in the face of possible future scenarios. Amid the present health crisis – and the poverty and confusion it has caused – we believe that it is time to subscribe to a global pact on education for and with future generations. This calls for a commitment on the part of families, communities, schools, universities, institutions, religions, governments and the entire human family to the training of mature men and women.

Today, we are called to have the necessary parrhesía to leave behind superficial approaches to education and the many short-cuts associated with utility, (standardized) test results, functionality and bureaucracy, which confuse education with instruction and end up atomizing our cultures. Instead, we should aim to impart an integral, participatory and polyhedral culture. We need the courage to generate processes that consciously work to overcome the existing fragmentation and the conflicts that we all bring with us. We need the courage to renew the fabric of relationships for the sake of a humanity capable of speaking the language of fraternity. The value of our educational practices will be measured not simply by the results of standardized tests, but by the ability to affect the heart of society and to help give birth to a new culture. A different world is possible and we are called to learn how to build it. This will involve every aspect of our humanity, both as individuals and in our communities.

Let us appeal in particular to men and women of culture, science and sport, artists and media professionals in every part of the world to join in supporting this compact and promoting by their own testimony and efforts the values of care for others, peace, justice, goodness, beauty, acceptance and fraternity. “We should not expect everything from those who govern us, for that would be childish. We have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies. Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people’s troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 77).

This calls for a pluralistic and multifaceted process in which all of us can work to provide meaningful responses, in which diversity and methods are harmonized in the pursuit of the common good. The ability to create harmony: that is what is needed today.

For these reasons, we commit ourselves personally and in common:

- **First**, to make human persons in their value and dignity the centre of every educational programme, both formal and informal, in order to foster their distinctiveness, beauty and uniqueness, and their capacity for relationship with others and with the world around them, while at the same time teaching them to reject lifestyles that encourage the spread of the throwaway culture.
- **Second**, to listen to the voices of children and young people to whom we pass on values and knowledge, in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.
- **Third**, to encourage the full participation of girls and young women in education.
- **Fourth**, to see in the family the first and essential place of education.
- **Fifth**, to educate and be educated on the need for acceptance and in particular openness to the most vulnerable and marginalized.
- **Sixth**, to be committed to finding new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth and progress that can truly stand at the service of the human person and the entire human family, within the context of an integral ecology.
- **Seventh**, to safeguard and cultivate our common home, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources, and to adopt a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and a circular economy.

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we want to commit ourselves courageously to developing an educational plan within our respective countries, investing our best energies and introducing creative and transformative processes in cooperation with civil society. In this, our point of reference should be the social doctrine that, inspired by the revealed word of God and Christian humanism, provides a solid basis and a vital resource for discerning the paths to follow in the present emergency.

The goal of this educational investment, grounded in a network of humane and open relationships, is to ensure that everyone has access to a quality education consonant with the dignity of the human person and our common vocation to fraternity. It is time to look to the future with courage and hope. May we be sustained by the conviction that education bears within itself a seed of hope: the hope of peace and justice; the hope of beauty and goodness; the hope of social harmony.

Let us not forget, brothers and sisters, that great changes are not produced from behind desks or in offices. No. There is an “architecture” of peace to which various institutions and individuals in society all contribute, each according to its own area of expertise, without excluding anyone (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 231). In this way, we must move forward, all of us together, each as we are, but always looking ahead to the building of a civilization of harmony and unity, in which there will be no room for the terrible pandemic of the throw-away culture. Thank you.

ANNEX NO 2

Instrumentum Laboris

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I. The project

1. Introduction

On September 12, 2019, with the Message for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education, Pope Francis summoned representatives from around the world to Rome to sign a common pledge to build a global compact on education. This initiative is not a new and sudden idea, but the tangible translation of a vision and thinking that have been repeatedly spelled out by the Holy Father in his speeches. Moreover, this proposal is in line with the Pope’s teachings which are clearly articulated in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and in the encyclical letter *Laudato Si*: two texts that have been inspired by Council and post-Council guidelines. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope invited the whole Church to be on an “outgoing” mission, as a style to be adopted in all activities. This invitation was addressed to all God’s people to make a proclamation that is open “to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear”: an announcement where “no one can be excluded” (EG 23). The outgoing Church is an enterprising community (“primerear”),

that can influence all processes of our personal and social life. And, along these lines, after having analyzed the problems of the world and of our contemporary culture, the Pope wrote that “we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a ‘mystique’ of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity...” (EG 87). In this invitation to take care of the fragility of the people and the world we live in – an invitation that does not concern only Christians but all men and women on earth – education and formation become priorities, as they help individuals to become direct protagonists and builders of peace and the common good. In the encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis reminds us that “education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature” (n. 215). Now more than ever – in a context torn by social conflicts and lacking a common vision – there is an urgent need for a change of pace – through an integral and inclusive education, that is able to engage in patient listening and constructive dialogue – whereby unity can prevail over conflict. To this end it is highly desirable, as the Pope argues, to initiate sharing and transformation processes through all necessary initiatives, to enable future generations to build a future of hope and peace. Based on these two important documents, with the 14 May 2020 event dedicated to the global compact on education, Pope Francis wishes to remind us of the idea that “all change, like the epochal change we are now experiencing, calls for a process of education and the creation of a village of education capable of forming a network of open and human relationships. That village should put the human person at the center, investing creatively and responsibly in long-term projects that train individuals willing to offer themselves in service to the community. What is needed, then, is an educational vision that can encompass a broad range of life experiences and learning processes, in order to enable young people, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities. Education is not limited to school and university classrooms; it is principally ensured by strengthening and reinforcing the primary right of the family to educate, and the right of Churches and social communities to support and assist families in raising their children” (Audience with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the Exchange of Greetings for the New Year, January 9, 2020).

2. The Compact: Openness to Others as the Foundation

Through his Message, the Holy Father asks us to commit to a global compact on education. He does not suggest an educational action, nor does he invite us to develop a program, but he focuses on a compact or, more specifically, on an educational covenant. The choice of words reveals much about the style with which the Pope invites us to undertake this task: for there to be a compact, in fact, there must be two or more people who choose to commit to a common cause. A compact implies choosing to put our strengths at the service of the same project, albeit maintaining our mutual differences. A compact implies the ability to see others who are different from us as our travelling companions, and not as a threat to our identity, to see in them “the image of God” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 165). Also, the term covenant, in the Jewish-Christian tradition, refers to the bond of love established between God and his people – a love that, in Jesus, broke down the wall between peoples, re-establishing peace (cf. Eph. 2:14- 15). On this basis, the Pope invites us to look for travelling companions on the path of education, rather than suggesting programs to follow; he invites us to establish a covenant among all those who value the uniqueness of each individual through a continuous commitment to formation. Therefore, we might say that respecting diversity is the first premise of this educational covenant. A global compact for education will primarily be based on the recognition of the indispensable character of each contribution to address the educational emergency that we have been experiencing for several decades, as Benedict XVI himself already recognized in his Letter to the Faithful of the Diocese and the City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People of January 21, 2008. And his words still ring true today: “We all have at heart the good of the people we love, especially our children, adolescents and young people. Indeed, we know that it is on them that the future of our City depends. Therefore, it is impossible not to be concerned about the formation of the new generations, about

their ability to give their lives a direction and to discern good from evil, and about their health, not only physical but also moral. Educating, however, has never been an easy task and today seems to be becoming ever more difficult. Parents, teachers, priests and everyone who has direct educational responsibilities are well-aware of this. Hence, there is talk of a great ‘educational emergency’, confirmed by the failures we encounter all too often in our efforts to form sound people who can cooperate with others and give their own lives meaning”.

3. The Original Fraternity

Fraternity is the cultural category that underpins and paradigmatically guides Francis’ papacy. Introducing fraternity into educational processes, as the Pope suggests in his Message, means recognizing it as a basic anthropological datum, from which all the main and positive “grammars” of a relationship can derive: encounter, solidarity, mercy, generosity, but also dialogue, exchange and, more generally, the various forms of reciprocity. Right from the very beginning, human life is a received fact that does not originate from our own selves. On the contrary, life transcends every single man and woman, and therefore it is not something that is self-produced, but it is given by someone else. For believers, as pointed out in the recent joint declaration of Abu Dhabi On Human Fraternity, it is a matter of recognizing each other as children of the one and only Father, and therefore as brothers and sisters who are called to mutual benevolence and stewardship (cf. Gen 4:9). However, as Pope Francis wished to stress from the beginning of his Magisterium, the vocation to fraternal stewardship “is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone” (Holy Mass for the Beginning of the Petrine Ministry, March 19, 2013). All humanity, in receiving life, discovers itself joined together in the bond of fraternity, which therefore manifests itself as the principle that expresses the structural reality of the human being (cf. *Laudato Si*, n. 220). If we can choose our friends or some of our companions, we certainly cannot choose our brothers or sisters, because we are not the authors of their existence. The more fraternity is exercised, the more it does not express primarily a moral duty, but rather the objective identity of mankind and the entire creation. Today’s throwaway culture is deeply rooted in the repeated rejection of fraternity as a constitutive element of humanity: “many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone” (*Laudato Si*, n. 202). It was precisely in this direction, in fact, that Pope Francis also framed his first Message for the World Day of Peace (January 1, 2014), which was aptly entitled Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace. Today, in view of the establishment of a global village of education, this principle has become even more topical, becoming in a way the real point of destination of all successful educational processes. The willingness to place oneself at the service of fraternity is a testament to the full attainment of our shared humanity. We have been created not only to live “with others”, but also to live “at the service of others”, in a salvific and enriching reciprocity.

II. The context

1. The Breakdown of Intergenerational Solidarity

When Pope Francis presented the event of May 14, 2020 to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, he indicated what is the most serious wound that today’s socio-cultural context causes to our educational commitment: “Education requires entering into sincere and genuine dialogue with young people. They are the ones who above all make us aware of the urgent need for that intergenerational solidarity which has sadly been lacking in recent years. There is, in fact, a tendency, in many parts of the world, to be self-absorbed, to defend acquired rights and privileges, and to view the world within a narrow horizon that treats the elderly with indifference and no longer welcomes the newborn. The general ageing of the world

population, especially in the West, is a sad and emblematic example of this” (Audience with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the Exchange of greetings for the New Year, 9 January 2020). According to Pope Francis, the ultimate roots of this tendency towards isolation and closure vis-à-vis others lies in a profound anthropological transformation, which he carefully laid out in his speech to participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life in October 2017. He stated: “Human beings seem now to find themselves at a special juncture in their history [...]. The key feature of this moment is, in a word, the rapid spread of a culture obsessively centered on the mastery of human beings – individually and as a species – over reality. Some have even spoken of an egolatry, a worship of the self, on whose altar everything is sacrificed, even the most cherished human affections. This approach is far from harmless, for it induces people to gaze constantly in the mirror, to the point of being unable to turn their eyes away from themselves and towards others and the larger world”. It goes without saying that it is exactly this kind of egolatry that generates all those fractures that our educational action is heavily affected by at all levels. We are talking about the rift between generations, between different peoples and cultures, between rich and poor parts of our population, the former increasingly richer and the latter increasingly poorer, the rift between males and females, between economics and ethics, between humanity and planet earth. Therefore, the kind of education we need today must be able to confront this new “idolatry of the self” and find the right words to give back to all the originality and beauty of the human vocation towards others and its destiny. “Together” is the word that saves and achieves everything.

2. Educational and Technological Times

In his encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI notes that “as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers” (n. 19). Today, one of the fundamental expressions of globalization is the development of technologies and, in particular, of technologies that pertain to people’s online life and social media, which perhaps have a deeper impact on the educational field. The use and management of these digital worlds gives rise to enormous challenges for our educational endeavors. As indicated in *Laudato Si*, although training requires constant growth and, therefore, change, “the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution” (n. 18). New generations, in ways hitherto unknown, are forced to live with this contradiction, because the times of learning and, more profoundly, those of maturity are far removed from the times of the Internet. Hence, this often leads to a strong sense of frustration and low self-esteem and self-awareness: why can I get what I want with a “click”, but I can’t – just as quickly – become an adult person, who can make important choices and take responsibility? Thus, the Internet and social media are radically altering both relationships between human beings, as well as individuals’ wishes and identity development, affecting different human abilities, such as memory, creativity, or the ability to focus and introspection. We certainly do not want to ignore the fact that the web offers great opportunities to build our future, but we must not underestimate its non-neutrality, and therefore we must consider its inherent limits and possibilities: technology “in fact proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others” (*Laudato Si*, n. 20). At the same time, by filtering any kind of reality, the virtual world, on the one hand, allows access to every corner of the planet, while on the other hand, it tends to contribute to the “globalization of indifference” which makes us slowly inured to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves” (Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2014). Faced with the great potential and risks that the Internet embodies today, neither a constant denunciation nor a total acquittal suffices. What is needed is what Pope Francis never fails to remind us of: i.e., discernment. And even more than that, we need people who can pass this attitude on to future generations. The kind of education we need today not only does not fear the complexity of reality, but strives to enable all those to whom it is addressed to dwell in this complexity and “humanize” it, in the awareness that any instrument always depends on the intentions of those who use it.

3. “E-ducating” the Question

“Psychological disaggregation”, mostly due to the previously mentioned pervasiveness of new technologies, is singled out by the Pope in his Message for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education as one of the most urgent educational issues. Today our attention is constantly attracted by rapid and multiple stimuli, which make it difficult to learn to live in silence, and this is particularly true with children and young people. The time and space that youths need, to become familiar with their wishes and fears, are increasingly filled with continuous and attractive interactions that entice them and tend to fill every moment of their day. Moreover, such interactions nourish calculating, instrumental, technical rationality (rationality of how), and not the rationality that responds to the profound meaning of things and life (rationality of why). In this incredible wealth of stimuli, we experience, so to speak, a profound dearth of interiority, a growing difficulty in pausing, reflecting, listening to ourselves and to one another. The diversity and speed of digital stimuli often “leads to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things, and for the broader horizon, which then becomes irrelevant” (*Laudato Si*, n. 110). Following what various religious leaders suggested to Pope Francis, it is necessary to focus today on educating the questions of our youth, which are a priority compared to providing answers: it is a matter of dedicating time and space to the development of the great questions and wishes that dwell into the hearts of new generations, who from a serene relationship with themselves might fulfill the search for the transcendent. On this subject, the Document on the Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together reminds us of “awakening religious awareness and the need to revive this awareness in the hearts of new generations” (p. 4). For believers it is a matter of awakening in young people, with appropriate timing, the wish to delve into their inner being to know and love God, for nonbelievers to animate a stimulating restlessness about the meaning of things and of their own existence.

4. Rebuilding Our Identity

The issue of fragmented identities, or the difficulty to develop a unified vision of the self, is strongly underlined by psychologists and educators, who see an increasing emergence of suffering among young people linked to this very problem. The indications given by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* on the throwaway culture provide a useful inspiration to dig deeper into this matter; in fact, we read that “the throwaway culture affects both excluded human beings and things” (n. 22). Among the people who are most affected by the throwaway culture we find the elderly and children: within the consumerist rationale, the former are discarded because they are no longer productive, the latter because they are not productive yet. However, a society that casts the elderly aside is a society that refuses to address its past, its memory and its roots: “The elderly are wisdom. And may the elderly learn to speak with the young and the young learn to speak with the elderly. They have the wisdom of a village, the elderly” (Address of the Holy Father to Faithful in Pietralcina, 17 March 2018). On the other hand, casting children aside reveals a lack of hope, vision and future, since children “bring their way of seeing reality, with a trusting and pure gaze” (General Audience, March 18, 2015). So, just as the present time is poor without a past and a future, so too our personal identity is empty without others, because it would lack both memory and perspective; this is why, with an impoverished soul and without hope, contemporary man is faced with insecurity and instability. It is therefore necessary to form individuals who can rebuild the broken connection with our memory and our hope in the future: young people who, aware of their roots and open to newness, know how to rebuild a more peaceful contemporary identity.

5. The Environmental Crisis as a Relational Crisis

The drive toward a renewed educational commitment to interiority and identity, that are increasingly prompted by our globalized and digital world, requires an unbroken connection with the wider social, cultural and environmental context surrounding it. Human beings and nature must be considered in their interdependence, because “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together;

we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation” (*Laudato Si*, n. 48). The lack of care for our inner being is reflected in a lack of care for the exterior, and vice versa: “Disregard for the 10 duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbor, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth” (*Laudato Si*, n. 70). But this happens “if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world” (*Laudato Si*, n. 11). Hence, of course, the need for an integral ecological education. The environmental challenge essentially refers to a more radical relational challenge, in which the future of generations and the planet itself is at stake. According to *Laudato Si*, considering the environmental question as inherently relational “prevents us from seeing nature as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it” (n. 139). Once again, this is an ontological and anthropological question, before being a moral one: “there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology” (*Laudato Si*, n. 118). Therefore, the integral ecology the Pope refers to should not be understood individualistically, as a sort of romantic and moral ecologism regarding nature’s disenchanted beauty, but stems from the full awareness that “everything is connected”, “everything is related”, as it is reiterated several times in *Laudato Si* (cf. nn. 70, 92, 117, 120, 138, 142). It is therefore only in the context of reciprocity between interior and exterior, identity and otherness, self and other, that it is possible to rediscover – as Pope Francis says – “a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things” (*Laudato Si*, n. 233) and, thus, to cherish them through a renewed and conscious way of life.

III. The vision

1. Unity in Difference: a New Thinking

At the origin of today’s fragmentations and oppositions, often leading to various forms of conflict, lies the fear of diversity (see also the recent Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2020). Therefore, restoring the fabric of unity and encounter requires a cognitive leap forward to radically change our usual logic. For as long as diversity and difference are considered hostile to unity, war will always be on our doorstep, ready to break out in all its destructive power. Hence, the first indispensable step to build a new humanism is to educate people to a new thought, that can reconcile unity and diversity, equality and freedom, identity and otherness. So, as *Evangelii Gaudium* states, for the flower of a new educational style to blossom, “it must reach the places where new stories and paradigms are formed” (n. 74). In a nutshell, it is a matter of understanding that not only diversity does not hinder unity, nor does it destabilize it, but – on the contrary – it is indispensable to it, it is its horizon of possibilities: unity and difference are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary they imply each other. Otherwise, we would be faced with a stifling unity, which kills otherness, making others impossible, as well as ourselves; or we would experience a chaotic disorder, in which individual identities are mutually indifferent to each other, making any encounter impossible. Therefore, we must practice a kind of thinking that expresses unity in diversity and considers differences as a blessing to our identity and not as a cumbersome obstacle to self-fulfillment. Educators must primarily work at this level because – as Pope Francis mentioned during his visit to Roma Tre University – “wars begin within us when we are unable to open ourselves up to others, when we are unable to speak with others”, when – in other words – otherness is seen as an obstacle to the affirmation of our identity. In educational practice, this new thinking leads to a broad dialogical exercise that freely involves anyone who wishes to work towards an authentic culture of encounter, mutual enrichment and fraternal listening: “In disagreements, which are also an unavoidable part of life, we should always remember that we are brothers and sisters, and therefore teach others and teach ourselves not to consider our neighbor as an enemy

or as an adversary to be eliminated” (Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2014), because “when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one” (*Laudato Si*, n. 92). In this sense, the role of interreligious dialogue is of crucial importance, since “it is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 250). When we engage in dialogue, “we learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking. We can then join one another in taking up the duty of serving justice and peace, which should become a basic principle of all our exchanges. A dialogue which seeks social peace and justice is in itself, beyond all merely practical considerations, an ethical commitment which brings about a new social situation” (ibid.). In the light of these considerations, we cannot but underline that this notion of dialogue and peace must increasingly enlighten and guide our elected representatives, who have been entrusted with the political and economic leadership of civil society. No genuine political action is possible outside the notion and practice of dialogue and peace.

2. The Relationship at the Center

Among the indispensable values to rebuild an educational covenant, it seems important to dwell on the value of the educational relationship. In the words of Pope Francis, we can in fact reiterate that “while not forgetting that young people look to the words and example of adults, we should also be well aware that they themselves have much to offer, thanks to their enthusiasm and commitment. To say nothing of their thirst for truth, which constantly reminds us of the fact that hope is not utopian and that peace is always a good that can be attained. We have seen this in the way many young people have become active in calling the attention of political leaders to the issue of climate change. Care for our common home ought to be a concern of everyone and not the object of ideological conflict between different views of reality or, much less, between generations” (Audience with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the Exchange of Greetings for the New Year, January 9, 2020). As our schooling experience confirms, a fruitful education does not primarily depend on the preparation of the teacher or the skills of the pupil, but on the quality of the relationship that is established between them. Several education scholars have pointed out that it is not the teacher who educates the pupil in a one-way transmission, nor do pupils alone build their knowledge, but rather it is their relationship that educates both teachers and pupils in a dialogical exchange that presupposes and exceeds them at the same time. This is, properly, what it means to put the person, who is relationship, at the center. This also involves taking concrete responsibility for the initial situations in which many boys and girls in the world find themselves today. In fact, we cannot hide the fact that there is a risk that the discourse on the centrality of the person in every educational process might become very abstract if we are not willing to open our eyes to the real situation of poverty, suffering, exploitation, denied possibilities, in which much of the world’s children find themselves in. And especially if we are not willing to do anything about it. As Pope Francis likes to put it, we must always act by connecting our head, our heart and then our hands.

3. The World Can Change

An additional and fundamental principle we should put back at the center of the educational agenda is the one whereby the world can change. Without this principle, human ambition, especially the ambition of our youngest brothers and sisters, is deprived of the hope and energy that is needed to transcend oneself, to lean more toward others. This issue was clearly identified in Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in Veritate*. In fact, “sometimes globalization is viewed in fatalistic terms, as if the dynamics involved were the product of anonymous impersonal forces or structures independent of the human will” (*Caritas in Veritate*, n. 42). Actually this is not the case, and the cultural, historical and economic events happening around us, however great they may be, should not be read as indisputable facts, that are determined by absolute laws. This is the message that Pope Francis wished to convey to young people when, on January 13, 2017, on the occasion of the publication of the Preparatory Document of the Synod on Youth, he wrote them a letter. One of the most moving passages from that letter is the following: “In Krakow, at the opening of the last World Youth Day,

I asked you several times: ‘Can we change things?’ And you shouted: ‘yes!’. That shout came from your young and youthful hearts, which do not tolerate injustice and cannot bow to a ‘throwaway culture’ nor give in to the globalization of indifference. Listen to the cry arising from your inner selves!!” Today, this invitation is addressed to all those who have political, administrative, religious and educational responsibilities: it is time to listen to the cry that rises from the depths of the hearts of our young people. It is a cry for peace, a cry for justice, a cry for brotherhood, a cry for outrage, a cry for responsibility and a commitment to change regarding all the wicked fruits generated by the current throwaway culture. And it is exactly in the power of this cry coming from young people – which finds ever more space in the many manifestations to which they give life – that everyone, especially those engaged in education, must find the strength to nourish that revolution of tenderness which will save our world with its too many wounds. Therefore, the need to stimulate the attractiveness of healthy risk-taking, and awaken our restlessness about reality, emerges with all its strength. To dare being restless means to risk exiting from ourselves, which entails “running the risk – as we read in *Evangelii Gaudium* – of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction” (n. 88). Only in this way will passion recover its momentum and become the protagonist of our existence, educating us to conscious and responsible lifestyles. It is precisely by using our own space of freedom well, in fact, that we contribute to personal and community growth: “We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread” (*Laudato Si*, n. 212).

IV. The mission

1. Education and Society

In his Message for the Launch of the Compact on Education, as already mentioned at the beginning, Pope Francis strongly emphasizes the urgency of establishing a “village of education” in which efforts are made to create a network of human and open relationships. He also added that such an enterprise will not be possible without the activation, by everyone, of a triple courage: first of all the courage to put the person at the center; secondly the courage to invest our best energies with creativity and responsibility; thirdly, and finally, the courage to form people who are willing to put themselves at the service of their community. Elaborating on the first point, that of the courage to put the person at the center, Pope Francis expressed himself as follows: “To do so, we must agree to promote formal and informal educational processes that cannot ignore the fact that the whole world is deeply interconnected, and that we need to find other ways, based on a sound anthropology, of envisioning economics, politics, growth and progress. In the development of an integral ecology, a central place must be given to the value proper to each creature in its relationship to the people and realities surrounding it, as well as a lifestyle that rejects the throw-away culture” (Message for the launch of the Compact on Education). At this point we have realized that there is a profound link between the encyclical letter *Laudato Si* and the initiative of the Compact on Education. Therefore, it is a matter of courageously acknowledging that the environmental and relational crisis we are experiencing can be tackled by devoting our attention to educating those who tomorrow will be called to guard our common home. Education, aimed at creating an “ecological citizenship” (*Laudato Si*, n. 211), can become an effective instrument to build a more welcoming society that is focused on the care of others and of creation, with a long-term outlook. In other words, our educational engagement is not addressed only to the direct beneficiaries, children and young people, but it is a service to society as a whole, which is renewed by educating. Moreover, our educational focus can provide an important meeting ground to rebuild a network of relationships between different institutions and social realities: to educate a child, a dialogue is needed between families, schools, religions, associations and civil society broadly speaking to pursue a common goal. Starting from the urgency of formation, therefore, it is possible to counteract the “silent rupture of

the bonds of integration and social cohesion” (*Laudato Si*, n. 46). We might say that education can now be understood as a path of formation for younger generations and, at the same time, as an opportunity to review and renew our entire society which, in an effort to transmit the best of itself to the youngest, discerns its own behavior and possibly improves it.

2. Tomorrow Demands the Best We Have Today

According to Pope Francis, the second courageous step towards a new compact on education consists in having the strength, as a (ecclesial, social, associative, political) community, to offer to education the best available energies we have. It is, of course, a courageous choice because every choice also involves favoring one aspect to the detriment of others. How many institutions today put the best they have at the service of young people? If we think about most of our contemporary companies, we can clearly see how the most creative and proactive forces are placed at the service of production and the market. The best young graduates and the brightest minds are often employed in large profit-oriented companies, rather than in the pursuit of the common good. At the same time, prevailing consumerism requires the absence, or only the faint presence, of formed people, who are endowed with a critical spirit and a relational drive. As a matter of fact, consumerist ideology feeds on individualism and incompetence in self-management, because it is outside the community that we are most fragile, and it is in the incapacity of clear-headedness that we meekly respond to propaganda stimuli. The courage of a real and radical reversal of course is needed: given the situation we have described, an investment is urgently required, because it is only through education that we can realistically hope for a positive change through long-term planning. Whatever will be in the future must rely on the best of what we have today. Whoever will be there in the future is entitled to the best of who is here today.

3. Educating to Serve, Educating is to Serve

Lastly, the third act of courage Pope Francis calls for is to form individuals who are willing to put themselves at the service of the community. To be honest, this indication sheds an apt light on a truly decisive element of every educational action: educators cannot succeed fully in their educational action unless they commit to forming and shaping – in the people entrusted to their care – a full and real openness to the service of others, of all others, of the whole human community, starting with those who find themselves in the most exhausting and challenging situations. The true service of education is education to service. Moreover, educational research also increasingly recognizes the central dimension of service to others and the community as a tool and as an end of education itself. Think for example about the great development of Service-Learning. This kind of research shows how service can be not only be a training activity among others (the importance of volunteer work in the training of young people is well recognized), but more radically how it can become the fundamental method through which all knowledge and skills can be transmitted and acquired. We could point to this process as a development from education to service to education as service, whereby our brethren are both the way and the goal of education. Lastly, we want to dedicate a few final words to Hannah Arendt, who was able to indicate in an effective and synthetic way what is really at stake in every educational gesture. These are her enlightening words: “Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world” (*Between Past and Future*, The Viking Press, New York 1961, 196).

Suggested themes for further reflection

- “Mystique” of living together
- Village of Education
- Fraternity and peace
- Egotry
- Positive Internet resources
- Education to silence
- Throwaway culture
- Thoughts of unity
- Restlessness in searching
- Revolution of tenderness
- Ecological Citizenshi



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