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Pope Francis to Scholas Occurrentes: in dialogue, everybody wins

Vatican City, 30 May 2016 – Yesterday afternoon Pope Francis met with the participants in the world congress, "Between university and school, a wall or a bridge" (Rome, 27-29 May 2016), organised by the foundation of pontifical right, "Scholas Occurrentes", which promotes social integration of the young and the culture of encounter for peace, also making use of a technological and editorial platform. First, in an adjacent room, he met for more than an hour with twelve of the most well-known "YouTubers" from around the world, answering questions ranging from how he felt when he learned he had been elected Pope, to the different types of language in communication. During the meeting with Scholas Occurrentes, a series of initiatives was presented, including the launch of a campaign against bullying with the hashtag #todossomosunicos, and the upcoming publication of a book entitled, in Italian, "Chiedete" ("Ask"), in which the Pope responds to questions sent by young people from all over the world, without exclusion on the basis of theme, via a digital platform.

The Holy Father expressed his appreciation for the climate of communication that prevailed yesterday afternoon. "A climate of encounter, of a 'bridge' that unites and that is a challenge for this world, a world that always runs the risk of becoming atomised, of separating. And when peoples separate, families separate, friends separate, and in separation one can sow only enmity and even hatred. Instead, when people unite there is social friendship, fraternal friendship; and there is a culture of encounter, that defends us from any type of throwaway culture."

One of the first questions was whether he had ever considered abandoning his role on account of the burden of responsibility. "No, I have not thought of leaving it due to the responsibility", he replied, admitting that "I didn't think they would have elected me. It came as a surprise to me. But from that moment God gave me a peace that is still with me today. And this leads me on. This is the grace I have received. On the other hand, by nature I am bold, and in this way I continue."

Another question related to how a better world can be constructed. "I believe that building a better world can be summarised in the things we have spoken about here together", he said; "that every person must be acknowledged in their identity. But identity does not exist without belonging. Try to offer a sense of belonging. One of you asked me: if a boy or a girl does not have a sense of belonging, how is it possible to help him or her? At least offer a sort of virtual belonging ... so that in this way he or she will have an identity. A person without an identity has no future. It is therefore urgent to offer this belonging of any type, but which lets someone feel they

belong to a group, a family, an organisation, something, and this can give them an identity. Identity and belonging".

In response to another question, the Pope underlined the importance of the language of gestures. "At times we like to talk, talk, talk. At times the language of gestures is different. It is not enough to talk. We risk 'peddling hot air' and this does not work. The language of gestures, that may at times be a caress, a smile... A smile that gives hope, looking in the eyes, gestures of approval, of patience, of tolerance: gestures."

"As for stopping aggression, bullying is an aggression that hides a profound cruelty, and the world is cruel. ... Wars are monuments to cruelty. A nun from an African country that is afflicted by internal wars, has sent me photographs, and I have them here. How far the cruelty of war reaches. A child with his throat cut, a child. We can understand bullying – if this happens, the cruelty of war, how can bullying not take place? It is the same cruelty against a child, a child who then goes on to do the same to another, if you sow cruelty. ... Therefore, to build a new world, a better world, we need to uproot all types of cruelty. And war is a cruelty. But this type of war is even crueler still, as it targets the innocent."

Francis again stressed the importance of dialogue, "of listening, of not arguing immediately, of asking questions: this is dialogue, and dialogue is a bridge. Do not be afraid of dialogue. ... It is about agreeing on proposals for forging ahead together. In dialogue everybody wins, and no-one loses. In arguments there is someone who wins and someone who loses, or both lose. Dialogue is gentleness, it is the capacity to listen, it is putting yourself in the other person's shoes, and building bridges. During dialogue, even if we think differently, not arguing but instead persuading gently. ... Pride and arrogance must be uprooted. Pride and arrogance always finish badly. The proud ends badly. Or rather, I would answer to this question: how can we build a better world? Via this path. We need to reduce the level of aggressiveness in the world. The world needs tenderness, gentleness, listening, journeying together. Otherwise, today these things happen, because the attitudes I have mentioned are lacking."

The Pope concluded by thanking those present for their collaboration, work and patience. "Let us think of all those young people from around the world with their different cultures, languages, races, religions", he added. "And let us speak to God with the text of the most ancient blessing, which is valid and used by the three monotheistic religions: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen."
