



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
SIGNED BY THE CARDINAL SECRETARY OF STATE,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST AFRICAN CONGRESS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

[Abidjan, 7-10 December 2023]

To His Excellency Bishop Philippe Rukamba and Dom Bernard Lorent
Co-Presidents of the *Fondation Internationale Religions et Sociétés*
KIGALI

His Holiness Pope Francis joins with you in heart and mind as you gather for the first African Catholic Education Congress to receive the African Education Pact. The Pope is pleased to know that this Educational Pact, which you presented to him on 1 June at the Vatican, was not the end of work undertaken for many years by the *Fondation Internationale Religions et Sociétés*, but that it marked a new stage in your commitment to promoting education in Africa.

His Holiness therefore welcomes the African Education Pact and hopes that it will increasingly become “a local reality, the result of reflections carried out on your own context and cultural resources, and that it should be attentive to the educational needs of the territory” ([*Address by Pope Francis to the Delegation of Promoters of the African Education Pact*](#), 1 June 2023).

Africa is not immune to the crisis that the education system is going through today, which, as in many places, has become too selective and elitist (cf. *Address to the Participants at the World Congress on Education*, 21 November 2015), aiming to form the intellect alone and not the whole person. Faced with this situation, Catholic Education, by enriching itself with the African Educational Pact, will be able to offer a renewed, more open and inclusive formation, creating in young people a beautiful harmony between thought and action. It will also be able to help shape a generation that draws on the socio-cultural values of the African continent, without giving in to the

temptation of self-absorption, but also being capable of dialogue with other cultures and religions.

This objective can only be achieved to the extent that Catholic Education, while instilling in young people their African identity, does not lose sight of its primary goal, which is to offer everyone “the Christian message... namely, that Jesus Christ is the meaning to life, to the cosmos and of history” (*Address to the Participants at the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education*, 13 February 2014). It is therefore important that everyone involved in Catholic education can be animated by the desire to communicate the Gospel through their lives, demonstrating consistency and adopting a pedagogical style that promotes the human and spiritual growth of students.

The Holy Father invites everyone involved to work so that Catholic education can prepare young people not for a spirit of competition, which leads to selfishness, but for a spirit of community and solidarity. That they may be capable of making positive and constructive choices, of being tomorrow's decision-makers, committed to building a society that is ever more fraternal and at the service of all, with respect for the common good. Indeed, quality education is a sign of hope and a solid foundation for the peaceful coexistence that Africa needs today.

The Pope encourages you in your desire to give new impetus to Catholic education in Africa and he thanks you for the work you carry out every day with dedication. He invokes upon you the graces of the Holy Spirit so that He may give you strength in your delicate mission in favour of the formation of young people in Africa. His Holiness wholeheartedly bestows his Apostolic Blessing on you.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State of His Holiness

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 7 December 2023