

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

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N. 161201b

Thursday 01.12.2016

The Pope to the participants in the Fourth World Congress for the Pastoral Care of International Students: those who have the gift of being able to study have a responsibility of service for the good of humanity

This morning Pope Francis received the participants in the Fourth World Congress for the Pastoral Care of International Students, organised by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples and held from 28 November to 2 December in Rome. Attended by students from 36 countries from five continents, the theme of the event is "Pope Francis' Evangelii Gaudium and moral challenges in the world of international students, with a view to a healthier society. The Holy Father considered this theme very interesting since "it is important for the new generations to move in this direction, to feel responsible for the situations in which they live, and to be artisans of the future". He recalled the words of St. Paul to the young disciple Timothy, when he advises him to give an example to the faithful in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity, without fear that anyone despise him for his youth. "In our time, the moral challenges to be faced are many, and it is not always easy to fight for the affirmation of the truth and values, especially when young", he remarked. "But with God's help, and with the sincere wish to do good, every obstacle can be overcome".

"It is necessary to counter the modern concept of the intellectual, engaged in the realisation of the self and in search of personal recognition, often without considering his or her neighbour, with a more fraternal model, working for the common good and for peace", he affirmed. "Those who have the gift of being able to study also have a responsibility of service for the good of humanity, and being students in a country different from your own, in another cultural context ... allows you to look at the world from a different perspective and to open up without fear to the other and that which is different. This causes students, and those who host them, to become more tolerant and hospitable. ... It is important that the period spent abroad become an opportunity for the human and cultural growth of students, and that it be for them a starting point for returning in their country of origin to give their qualified contribution and also a further impulse to transmit the joy of the Good News. It is necessary for education to teach critical thought and to offer a path toward maturity in values. In this way, young people are formed to thirst for truth and not power, ready to defend values and to live with mercy and charity, the fundamental pillars for a healthier society. Personal and cultural enrichment permits the young to enter more easily into the world of work, ensuring them a place in the community so they become an integral part of it. For its part, society is called to offer valid employment opportunities to the new generations, avoiding the so-called 'brain drain'. That one might freely choose to specialise and work abroad is good and fruitful; however, it is painful when educated young people are induced to abandon their homeland due to a lack of suitable

opportunities”.

The phenomenon of international students is not new, although it has been intensified by so-called globalisation, which has broken down spatial and temporary boundaries, favouring the encounter and exchange between cultures. But, the Holy Father warned, here too we witness negative aspects, such as the emergence of certain closed attitudes, defence mechanisms when faced with diversity ... that prevent us from looking our brothers and sisters in the eye and discerning their real needs. Even among the young – and this is very sad – the ‘globalisation of indifference’ can creep in, making them incapable of feeling compassion for other people’s pain. In this way, these effects can have repercussions on people and on communities”.

“Instead, dear friends, let us hope that your way of living globalisation can produce positive outcomes and activate great potential”, emphasised the Pope at the end of his address. “Indeed, you students, passing time far from your country, in different families and contexts, can develop a significant capacity for adaptation, learning to care for others as brothers and for creation as our common home, and this is decisive in making the world more human. Paths of learning can accompany and guide young students in this direction, and can do so with the freshness and boldness of the Gospel, to form new evangelisers ready to spread Christ’s joy in the world, to the very ends of the earth. ... St. John Paul II liked to call you “sentinels of the morning”. I encourage you to be this way every day, with your gaze turned to Christ and to history. In this way you will be able to proclaim the salvation of Jesus and carry His light in a world too often darkened by the shadows of indifference, selfishness and war”.
