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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 200408c

Wednesday 08.04.2020

## **Other News**

### **Press Release of the Congregation for Catholic Education**

The time we are experiencing due to the spread of the pandemic caused by Covid-19 is a time we were not prepared for. We were overwhelmed by a traumatic event, which came suddenly and which created an extraordinary emergency. There are those who struggle with death, those with fear, those who have lost their family members, their friends, their employment.

The dimension of the unexpected and of the unforeseen has overshadowed many of our certainties. This pandemic has highlighted the fragility and the wounds of society: the poor, the homeless, the elderly, the prisoners, the social imbalances, as well as individual and national selfishness.

And within this blackout, which has produced a profound rupture in our ordinary life and in the society of the third millennium, we have the duty to return to consider more deeply the meaning of life, to finding ways to begin again to live once more, beginning from new foundations, knowing well it will never be the same as before.

A clear direction comes from the experience Pope Francis made us live during the prayer of Friday, the 27th of March 2020, at St. Peter's Square. We must go back in memory to the story lived by God with men and women, preserved by the traditions of our peoples, as the Pope showed us when stopping in front of the Crucifix in a deserted square battered by rain, in order to understand that his death saved us, and made us all brothers.

From this extraordinary and iconic event, which will remain in history, comes the spiritual energy which can help us to respond to the multifaceted crisis that we are currently experiencing; personal crises, crises of relationships; for some, even crises of faith because they sense the apparent distance of God; crises of the community, of a people and of its institutions; crises of history and of the world.

In the face of this crisis and in the spirit of Lent experienced this year in a truly exceptional way, for the believer there remains the light of the Easter resurrection. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ open up a perspective of life that will have no end and that allows us to look to the future with confidence and solid hope.

The Congregation for Catholic Education wishes to express its closeness and encouragement to all Catholic schools, Ecclesiastical Faculties and Catholic Universities; in particular it gives thanks to the Directors, Rectors, Presidents, Deans, teachers, and administrative and service staff who, in recent months, have been carrying the heavy burden of ensuring the operation of their institutional and academic activities through various online methods in order to guarantee the continuity and regular conclusion of the current year, as indicated in the Note of the Congregation, concerning the equivalent examinations and tests of the Ecclesiastical Academic Institutions (March 12, 2020).

UNESCO, taking into consideration the interventions necessary for dealing with serious emergency situations, has recalled one of the objectives of their Education 2030 Agenda, which stressed the need to "develop education systems that are more resilient and responsive in the face of conflict, social unrest and natural hazards – and to ensure that education is maintained during emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations". Unfortunately, the abruptness of this event did not allow enough time for an adequate preparation in order to introduce the necessary adoption of distance learning required to assure the continuity of lectures in all institutions.

Furthermore, the crisis produced by the pandemic has created a serious emergency not only for schools and academic institutions, but it has directly involved families who, while carrying out their work, find themselves constrained to adapting to the need to assist their children studying at home; not all of them are equipped with the corresponding information technology tools, nor are they prepared to deal with the continuous presence of their children at home.

Confronted with all of these problems, in the first place that which concerns health and the precautions needed to safeguard it, we are called to respond to the most immediate exigencies, in order to arrive at a regular conclusion of the current academic year. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the fact that the current situation may continue, therefore it is necessary to organize for the future to be able to discern any opportunities which this crisis could offer us.

While we invite you to keep yourselves updated with what the Ministries responsible for schools and universities are organizing for educational institutions in their own countries, we urge everyone to support and to secure the safety of children and young people, and therefore to face this particular moment patiently, with active and intelligent mutual collaboration, for as long as necessary.

St. Paul wrote to the Community of Ephesus: "Watch carefully then how you live [...] making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil [...] be filled with the Spirit [...] giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." (Ephesians 5:15-20) This crisis can become an opportunity for Catholic educational institutions across the world to strengthen their testimony to their identity and mission as a community of faith and charity.

With St. Paul we invite you to renew your faith in the Risen One, and to live this moment in active vigilance, using the gifts received from God in the best possible way.

Our Easter wish for everyone is for the renewal of faith in the mystery and reality of the resurrection of the Son of God, who gives meaning to and illuminates all of reality. This spurs us on to open our hearts and minds to God and to our brethren with courage and determination, and to invest our talents in this present moment. Yes, because the believer is not asked to live an unembodied and abstract spirituality, but one that corresponds to reality in which light, fraternity, joy and peace must be infused.

With this in mind we take the occasion to wish you a blessed Easter!

Vatican City, 7 April 2020

**Giuseppe Cardinal VERSALDI**

Prefect

**Angelo Vincenzo ZANI**

Titular Archbishop of Volturno

Secretary

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