



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Audience with the participants in the General Chapter of the Canonesses of Saint Augustine of the Notre-Dame Congregation

This morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapter of the Canonesses of Saint Augustine of the Notre-Dame Congregation.

The following is the Holy Father's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear sisters!

I welcome you on the occasion of your General Chapter. I thank the Superior for her kind words, also with her sense of humour, but good, *avec le sens de l'humour*. I heartily greet each one of you and, through you, I express my spiritual closeness to all the sisters of your Congregation in various countries.

Along with you, I thank the Lord for the work of his Spirit, made manifest in your educational charism, in the service of the new generations and families, for an integral humanism and a more fraternal world. Today, we find ourselves facing a challenge to the formation and education of the human person. Faithful to the evangelical intuition of your founders Saint Pierre Fourier and Blessed Alix Le Clerc, you are committed to a popular education, education in faith, education in justice and closeness to the poor. In the various countries where you work, I encourage you to be missionary disciples and communities of hope and joy, since "the great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience" – the tragedy of the blunted conscience. "Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2).

Dear sisters, the theme you have chosen for your Chapter, “Educational Pact of the Notre-Dame Congregation”, is a strong invitation to reflect on new possible ways of reaching young people in their daily lives, with the aim of contributing to their integral development. Indeed, “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” [1]. Faced with the challenges and dangers that threaten young people, I hope that your commitment and your enthusiasm, forged in the strength of the Gospel, may restore to them the taste for life and the desire to build a society worthy of this name (cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 71).

Dear sisters, I count on you and I trust in you, the Church trusts in you. With your words, your deeds and your witness, you send a powerful message to the world that rejects the most vulnerable categories. May you drink from the wellspring of goodness and truth through prayer and adoration, and find in communion with Christ, who died and rose again, the strength to cast a positive gaze, a gaze of love and a gaze of hope, a compassionate gaze, a gaze of tenderness, on the world, paying particular attention to the disadvantaged strata of society. It is in this way that your mission as educators will bear quality fruit among the people for the good of society. Thanks to your charism, which seeks to make each person discover the love of Christ, you contribute to opening up new horizons and creating spaces for fraternity. In fact, “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” [2]

Dear sisters, at this time, in which the Covid-19 pandemic has produced a crisis with many aspects, in particular a strong impact on education and on the young, I invite you to be closer to people who experience isolation, sadness and discouragement. Indeed, “we need to use above all the language of closeness, the language of generous, relational and existential love that touches the heart, impacts life, and awakens hope and desires” (Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 211).

I entrust each one of you, and all your sisters, to the Lord and to the Virgin Mary, and I bless you from my heart. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

[1] *Video Message on the occasion of the meeting organized by the Congregation for Catholic Education: “Global Compact on Education. Together to look beyond”* (15 October 2020).

[2] *Ibid.*
