



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF
"SCHOOLS FOR PEACE"**

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 19 April 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear boys, dear girls, dear teachers, good morning everyone!

I am pleased to meet once again the “Schools for Peace” national network. I greet Dr Lotti and I welcome all of you.

I first want to thank you. Thank you for this journey, rich in ideas, initiatives, educational processes and activities, which aim to promote a new world vision. Thank you for being full of enthusiasm in pursuing objectives of beauty and goodness, in the midst of tragic situations, injustices and violence that disfigure human dignity. Thank you, because with passion and generosity you are committed to working in the “building site of the future”, overcoming the temptation of a life restricted merely to today, which risks losing the ability to dream big. However, today more than ever, there is a need to live responsibly, broadening our horizons, looking forward and sowing, day by day, those seeds of peace that tomorrow will be able to germinate and bear fruit. Thank you, boys and girls!

This coming September, the *Summit of the Future* will take place in New York, convened by the United Nations to face the major global challenges of this moment in history and to sign a “Pact for the Future” and a “Declaration on Future Generations”. It is an important event, and your contribution is also needed so that it does not remain only “on paper”, but becomes concrete and is implemented through processes and actions for change.

You carry in your heart this great dream: “*Let us transform the future. For peace, with care*”. And on this point, I would like to pause briefly to tell you something I very strongly believe: that you are called — listen carefully — you are called to be *protagonists and not spectators of the future*. I ask you: to what are you called? To be what? [*The young people answer*]. I can’t hear you! [*The young people answer loudly*]. Come on! Go ahead! The convocation of this global Summit, in fact, reminds us that we are all called to build a better future and, above all, that we must build it together! I ask you: Can we build the future by ourselves? [*The young people answer “no”*]. I can’t hear you... [*A loud “no”*]. Must we build it? [*“Yes!”*]. Good! We cannot simply delegate concerns about the “world to come” and the resolution of its problems to designated institutions and to those who have particular social and political responsibilities. It is true that these challenges require specific skills, but it is equally true that they affect us closely, touching everyone’s lives and demanding active participation and personal commitment from each one of us. In a globalized world like this one, where we are all interdependent, it is not possible to proceed as lone individuals who tend only to their own “garden”, who cultivate their own interests: it is instead necessary *to connect and form networks*. What is needed? *To connect and form networks*. What is needed? *To connect and form networks*. All together! [*The young people answer*]. Good, yes, and this is important: it is necessary to connect, to work in synergy and harmony. This means *passing from “I” to “we”*: not “I work for my own good”, but “we work for the common good, for the good of all”. We work for the good of all. Together! [*The young people repeat*]. Good!

In effect, today’s challenges, and especially the risks that, like dark clouds, gather above us, threatening our future, have also become global. They affect all of us, they challenge the entire human community, they require the courage and creativity of a *collective dream* that inspires constant commitment in order to confront, together, the environmental crises, the economic crises, the political and social crises that our planet is going through.

Dear boys, dear girls, dear teachers, it is a dream that requires that we be awake, and not slumbering! Yes, because it is brought about by working, not sleeping; walking the streets, not lying on the sofa; using information technology well, not wasting time on social media; and then — listen carefully — this type of dream is fulfilled also with prayer, that is, together with God, and not by our own strength alone.

Dear students, dear teachers, you have placed two keywords at the heart of your commitment: *peace* and *care*. They are two interconnected realities: indeed, peace is not merely the silence of weapons and the absence of war; it is a climate of benevolence, trust and love that can mature in a society based on relations of care, in which individualism, distraction and indifference give way to the capacity to pay attention to others, to listen to them in their fundamental needs, to heal their wounds, to be instruments of compassion and healing for him or her. This is the care that Jesus has towards humanity, in particular towards the most fragile, and of which the Gospel speaks often. From mutual “caring”, an inclusive society, founded on peace and dialogue, is born.

In this time, still marked by war, I ask you to be artisans of peace; in a society still imprisoned by the throwaway culture, I ask you to be protagonists of inclusion; in a world traversed by global crises, I ask you to be builders of the future, so that our common home may become a place of fraternity.

I would like to speak to you for a couple of minutes about war. Think of the children who are in war, think of the Ukrainian children who have forgotten how to smile. Pray for these children, keep them in your heart... the children who are in war. Think of the children of Gaza, under fire, who are hungry. Think of the children. Now a moment's silence, and each one of us, let us think of the Ukrainian children and the children of Gaza.

I wish for you always to be impassioned by the dream of peace. I say so with the motto of Don Lorenzo Milani, the prior of Barbiana, who opposed the "I don't care" typical of uncaring indifference, with the "I care", that is, "I take it to heart", "I am interested". May all this be dear to you. May you always care about the fate of our planet and your fellow human beings; may you care about the future that is opening before us, so that it may truly be as God dreams it for all: a future of peace and beauty for all humanity. And may you care about the children of Ukraine, who forget how to smile; the children of Gaza, who suffer under machine-gun fire. I bless you from my heart. Enjoy school and have a good journey! And, please, remember to pray for me.

Thank you very much!

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