



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE STUDENTS OF THE JESUIT SCHOOLS OF ITALY AND ALBANIA

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 7 June 2013*

[[Multimedia](#)]

The Holy Father addressed to students, alumni, teachers and parents that he had given in his prepared speech for publication but would here summarize the text for them so that they might have time for discussion.

Below is the [speech prepared for publication](#) and the transcription of the [Holy Father's summary and of his spontaneous question](#) and answer session with young people.

Dear Young People,

I am glad to receive you with your families, educators and the friends of the great family of Jesuit schools in Italy and Albania. My affectionate greeting to you all: welcome! I truly feel “at home” with all of you. Moreover our meeting coincides with the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which is a special cause of joy.

I would like first of all to tell you something that has to do with St Ignatius of Loyola, our founder. In the autumn of 1537, on his way to Rome with a group of his first companions, he wondered: if people ask us who we are, how should we answer? The answer came spontaneously: “We shall say that we are the ‘Society of Jesus’” (*Fontes Narrativi Societatis Iesu*, vol. 1, pp. 320-322).

This demanding name intends to suggest a relationship of very close friendship and of total affection for Jesus in whose footsteps they wanted to follow. Why have I told you about this event?

Because St Ignatius and his companions had realized that Jesus was teaching them how to live well, how to live a life that had profound meaning, that imparted enthusiasm, joy and hope; they had understood that Jesus is a great teacher of life and a model of life, and that he was not only teaching them but also inviting them to follow him on this path.

Dear young people, if I were to ask you now: why do you go to school, what would you answer me? There would probably be a whole range of replies, according to the sensibility of each person. Yet I think that they could all be summed up together by saying that school is one of the educational environments in which we develop through learning how to live, how to become grown-up, mature men and women who can travel, who can follow the road of life. How does school help you to grow? It helps you not only by developing your intelligence, but also by an integral formation of all the aspects of your personality.

In following what St Ignatius teaches us, the main element at school is to learn to be magnanimous. Magnanimity: this virtue of the great and the small (*Non coerceri maximo contineri minimo, divinum est*), which always makes us look at the horizon. What does being magnanimous mean? It means having a great heart, having greatness of mind; it means having great ideals, the wish to do great things to respond to what God asks of us. Hence also, for this very reason, to do well the routine things of every day and all the daily actions, tasks, meetings with people; doing the little everyday things with a great heart open to God and to others. It is therefore important to cultivate human formation with a view to magnanimity. School does not only broaden your intellectual dimension but also your human one. And I think that Jesuit schools take special care to develop human virtues: loyalty, respect, faithfulness and dedication.

I would like to reflect on two fundamental values: freedom and service. First of all: be free people! What do I mean? Perhaps it is thought that freedom means doing everything one likes, or seeing how far one can go by trying drunkenness and overcoming boredom. This is not freedom. Freedom means being able to think about what we do, being able to assess what is good and what is bad, these are the types of conduct that lead to development; it means always opting for the good. Let us be free for goodness. And in this do not be afraid to go against the tide, even if it is not easy! Always being free to choose goodness is demanding but it will make you into people with a backbone who can face life, people with courage and patience (*parrhesia* and *ypomoné*). The second word is service. In your schools you take part in various activities that accustom you to not retreating into yourselves or into your own small world, but rather to being open to others, especially the poorest and neediest. They accustom you to working hard to improve the world in which we live. Be men and women with others and for others: true champions at the service of others.

In order to be magnanimous with inner freedom and a spirit of service, spiritual formation is necessary. Dear young people, love Jesus Christ more and more! Our life is a response to his call and you will be happy and will build your life well if you can answer this call. May you feel the

Lord's presence in your life. He is close to each one of you as a companion, as a friend who knows how to help and understand you, who encourages you in difficult times and never abandons you. In prayer, in conversation with him and in reading the Bible you will discover that he is truly close. You will also learn to read God's signs in your life. He always speaks to us, also through the events of our time and our daily life; it is up to us to listen to him.

I do not want to take too long, but I would also like to address directly the educators: the Jesuits, the teachers, those who work in your schools and your parents. Do not be disheartened in the face of the difficulties that the educational challenge presents! Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them.

Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation and of man who always retains the Creator's hallmark. But above all with your life be witnesses of what you communicate. Educators — Jesuits, teachers, operators, parents — pass on knowledge and values with their words; but their words will have an incisive effect on children and young people if they are accompanied by their witness, their consistent way of life. Without consistency it is impossible to educate! You are all educators, there are no delegates in this field.

Thus collaboration in a spirit of unity and community among the various educators is essential and must be fostered and encouraged. School can and must be a catalyst, it must be a place of encounter and convergence of the entire educating community, with the sole objective of training and helping to develop mature people who are simple, competent and honest, who know how to love with fidelity, who can live life as a response to God's call, and their future profession as a service to society.

Now I would like to tell the Jesuits that it is important to nourish your commitment in the educational sector. Schools are a precious means for making a contribution to the progress of the Church and of society as a whole. Moreover, the educational field is not limited to the conventional school. Encourage each other to seek new forms of non-conventional education in accordance with "the needs of the times and of people".

Lastly a greeting to all the alumni present, to the representatives of Italian schools of the *Fe y Alegria* Network, which I know well because of the important work it does in South America, especially among the poorest classes. And a special greeting to the delegation of the *Collegio albanese di Scutari*, which after the long years of repression of religious institutions, resumed its activity in 1994, accepting and educating Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim children as well as several pupils born into agnostic milieus. The school is thus becoming a place for dialogue and serene exchanges to encourage attitudes of respect, listening, friendship and a spirit of collaboration.

Dear friends, I thank you all for this meeting. I entrust you to the motherly intercession of Mary and accompany you with my blessing: the Lord is always close to you, he picks you up when you fall and impels you to develop and to make ever loftier decisions, “*con grande ánimo y liberalidad*”, with magnanimity. *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*.

Dear Girls and Boys, Dear Young People,

I prepared this address for you... but it is five pages long! Somewhat boring. Let's do something else: I will briefly summarize it and give the written text to Father Provincial, and I will also give it to Fr Lombardi so that you may all have it in writing. And then it will be possible for a few of you to ask a question and we can have a little dialogue. Do we like this idea or not? Yes? Good. Let's follow this route.

The first point in the text is that the key point in the education we Jesuits give — for our personal development — is magnanimity. We must be magnanimous, with a big heart, without fear; always betting on the great ideals. However this also means magnanimity in little things, in daily things — the big heart, the great heart. And it is important to find this magnanimity with Jesus, in contemplating Jesus. Jesus is the One who opens windows for us on the horizon. Magnanimity means walking with Jesus, with a heart attentive to what Jesus tells us. On this track I would like to say something to the educators, to those who work in schools, and to parents. Educating, in educating a balance must be maintained, your steps must be well balanced, one step on the cornice of safety but the other into the zone of risk. And when the risk becomes safe, the next step must venture into another area of risk. Education cannot be confined to the safety zone. No. This would mean preventing personalities from developing; yet it is not possible to educate solely in the risk zone either: this is too dangerous. It is a balance of steps: remember it well.

We have come to the last page. I also want to encourage you, educators, to seek new, unconventional forms of education, so as to comply with the needs of places, times and people. This is important; in our Ignatian spirituality: always go a step “further” and never be satisfied with conventional things. Seek new forms in accordance with the places, times and people. I encourage you to do this.

And now I am willing to answer several questions which you, both the young and the educators,

may want to ask me. I am ready. I have asked Father Provincial to help me to do so.

A boy: I am Francesco Bassani, of the Istituto Leone XIII. I am a boy who, Papa, as I wrote in my letter to you, seeks to believe. I am searching... searching, yes, to be faithful. However I have difficulties. Sometimes doubts come to me. And I believe that this is absolutely normal for my age. Since you are the Pope who I believe I will have the longest in my heart, in my life, because I am meeting you in the time of my adolescence, of my development, I wanted to ask you for a few words to help me in my growth and to support all the other young people like me.

Pope Francis: Walking is an art; if we are always in a hurry we tire and cannot reach our destination, the destination of our journey. Yet if we stop and do not move, we also fail to reach our destination. Walking is precisely the art of looking to the horizon, thinking about where I want to go, and also coping with the weariness that comes from walking. Moreover, the way is often hard-going, it is not easy. "I want to stay faithful to this journey, but it is not easy; listen: there is darkness, there are days of darkness, days of failure, and some days of falling... someone falls, falls". Yet always keep this in your thoughts: do not be afraid of failure, do not be afraid of falling. In the art of walking it is not falling that matters, but not "staying fallen". Get up quickly, immediately, and continue to go on. And this is beautiful: it is working every day, it is walking humanly. But also: it is terrible to walk alone, terrible and tedious. Walking in community, with friends, with those who love us: this helps us, it helps us to arrive precisely at the destination where we must arrive. I don't know if I have answered your question. Have you understood? You won't be afraid of the journey? Thank you.

A girl: I am Sofia Grattarola from the Istituto Massimiliano Massimo. And I wanted to ask you, given that like all children, when you were at elementary school you had friends, didn't you? And since today you are Pope, do you still see these friends?

Pope Francis: I have been Pope for two and a half months. My friends are a 14-hour flight away, they are far away. But I want to tell you something: three of them came here to see me and greet me, and I see them and they write to me, and I love them very much. It is impossible to live without friends. This is important, it is important.

A young girl: My name is Teresa: But Francis, did you want to be Pope?

Pope Francis: Do you know what it means when a person does not really love himself? A person who wants, who has the wish to be Pope does not love himself. God does not bless him. No, I did not want to be Pope. Is that okay? Come, come, come....

A woman: Your Holiness, we are Monica and Antonella, members of the Alunni del Cielo Choir of the Istituto Sociale di Turin. Since we were educated at Jesuit schools, we are often asked to reflect on the spirituality of St Ignatius. We wanted to ask you: At the time when you chose the

consecrated life, what was it that urged you to be a Jesuit rather than a diocesan priest or a member of another order? Thank you.

Pope Francis: I frequently stayed at the *Sociale* of Turin. I know it well. What I liked about the Society is its missionary outreach and I wanted to be a missionary. And when I was studying theology I wrote to the General, who was Fr Arrupe, asking him to dispatch me, to send me to Japan or to some other place. However, he thought about it at length and said to me, with great kindness, “But you have had a lung disease, which is not very good for such demanding work”, so I stayed in Buenos Aires. Fr Arrupe was so kind because he did not say: “But you are not holy enough to become a missionary”: he was kind, he was charitable. It was the dimension of mission that gave me such great determination to be a Jesuit: to go out, to go to the missions and proclaim Jesus Christ. I believe this is feature specific to our spirituality: to go out, to go out to always proclaim Jesus Christ and to never stay somehow closed in our structures, which are so often transient. This is what motivated me. Thank you.

A woman: I am Caterina De Marchis of the Istituto Leone XIII, and I was wondering: why you [Le]— that is, you [using the familiar *tu*] — have renounced the riches of a Pope, like a luxurious apartment and an large car. Instead you have opted for a small apartment close by, and you even took the bus for bishops. Why ever did you give up riches?

Pope Francis: Well, I believe it is not only a matter of wealth. For me it is a question of personality: that is what it is. I need to live with people, and were I to live alone, perhaps a little isolated, it wouldn't be good for me. I was asked this question by a teacher: “But why don't you go and live there?”. I replied: “please listen, professor, it is for psychological reasons”. It is my personality. Also, the apartments [in the Papal Palace] are not so luxurious, they are peaceful.... however, I cannot live alone, do you understand? And then I believe, yes: the times speak to us of such great poverty throughout the world, and this is a scandal. The poverty of the world is a scandal. In a world where there is such great wealth, so many resources for giving food to everyone, it is impossible to understand how there could be so many hungry children, so many children without education, so many poor people! Poverty today is a cry. We must all think about whether we can become a little poorer. This is something we must all do. How I can become a little poorer to be more like Jesus, who was the poor Teacher. This is the thing. But it is not a problem of my personal virtue, it is only that I cannot live alone, and the matter of the car, as you said: to not have too many things and to become a little poorer. It is this.

A boy: My name is Eugenio Serafini, I attend the Istituto CEI, the Ignatian Educational Centre. I wanted to ask you a quick question: how did you get through it, when you decided to become, not Pope, but a parish priest, to become a Jesuit. How did you do it? Wasn't it difficult for you to abandon or leave your family and friends.

Pope Francis: You know, it is always difficult. Always. It was hard for me. It is far from easy. There

are beautiful moments, and Jesus helps you, he gives you a little joy. All the same there are difficult moments when you feel alone, when you feel dry, without any interior joy. There are clouded moments of interior darkness. There are hardships. But it is so beautiful to follow Jesus, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, that you then find balance and move forward. And then come even more wonderful moments. But no one must think that there will not be difficult moments in life. I would now like to ask a question myself. How do you think you can move forward with the hardships? It isn't easy; but we must go ahead with strength and with trust in the Lord, with the Lord everything is possible.

A young woman: Hello, my name is Federica Iaccarino and I come from the Istituto Pontano in Naples. I wanted to ask you for a word about today's youth, about the future of young people today, considering the difficult situation that Italy is in. And I would like to ask for your help in improving that situation, help for us, so that these young people, so that we young people, can move ahead.

Pope Francis: You say that Italy is going through a difficult time. Yes, there is a crisis. But I will tell you this: it is not only in Italy. Right now the whole world is in crisis. And crisis is not a bad thing. It is true that the crisis causes us suffering but we — and first and foremost all you young people — must know how to interpret the crisis. What does this crisis mean? What must I do to help us to come through this crisis? The crisis we are experiencing at this time is a human crisis. People say: it is an economic crisis, it is a crisis of work. Yes, that's true. But why? This work problem, this problem in the economy, is a consequence of the great human problem. What is in crisis is the value of the human person, and we must defend the human person. Now, I have said this three times already, but I will say it for a fourth. I once read a story about a medieval rabbi in the year 1200. This rabbi explained to the Jews of that time the history of the Tower of Babel. Building the Tower of Babel was not easy. They had to make bricks; and how is a brick made? Mud and straw must be fetched, they must be mixed and the bricks brought to the kiln. It involved a lot of work. And after all this work a brick became a real treasure! They then had to hoist the bricks in order to build the Tower of Babel. If a brick fell it was a tragedy! But if a man fell nothing happened! It is this crisis that we are living today, this same crisis. It is the crisis of the person. Today the person counts for nothing, it is coins, it is money that count. And Jesus, God, gave the world, the whole creation, to the person, to men and women that they might care for it; he did not give it to money. It is a crisis, the person is in a crisis because today — listen carefully, it is true — the person is a slave! We must liberate ourselves from these economic and social structures that enslave us. This is your duty.

A young boy: Hello, I am Francesco Vin and I come from the Collegio Sant'Ignazio in Messina. I wanted to ask you if you have ever been to Sicily?

Pope Francis: No. I can say two things: no or rather not yet.

The young boy: If you come we will look forward to it!

Pope Francis: Let me tell you one thing: I know a wonderful film about Sicily that I saw 10 years ago. It is called *Kaos*, with a “k”: *Kaos*. It is a film based on four short stories by Pirandello and it really is a beautiful film. This is the only thing I know about Sicily. But it is beautiful!

A teacher: Holy Father, I am a Spanish language teacher, Jesús Maria Martínez, because I am Spanish: I’m from San Sebastian. I also teach religion and I can say that we, the teachers and professors, really love you; that is for sure. I am not speaking on behalf of anyone, but seeing so many alumni, so many important figures too, and also we adults, teachers educated by the Jesuits, I wonder about our political, and social commitment, in society, as adults in the Jesuit schools. Please give us a few words: how can we give our task, our work today in Italy and throughout the world, a Jesuit hallmark? How can we make it evangelical?

Pope Francis: Very well. Involvement in politics is an obligation for a Christian. We Christians cannot “play the role of Pilate”, washing our hands of it; we cannot. We must be involved in politics because politics is one of the highest forms of charity for it seeks the common good. And Christian lay people must work in politics. You will say to me: “But it isn’t easy!”. Nor is it easy to become a priest. Nothing is easy in life. It is not easy, politics has become too dirty: but I ask myself: Why has it become dirty? Why aren’t Christians involved in politics with an evangelical spirit? I leave you with a question. It is easy to say: “It is so and so’s fault”. But me, what do I do? It is a duty! Working for the common good is a Christian’s duty! And often the way to work for that is politics. There are other ways: being a teacher, for example, teaching is another route. However, political life for the common good is one of the ways. This is clear.

A young man: Father, my name is Giacomo. In fact, I am not alone here today but have come with a large number of youth from the Lega Missionaria Studenti. It is a somewhat transversal movement, so we have some Missionary League Students from more or less all the schools. So Father, first of all my thanks and those of all the young people whom I have also been in touch with in the past few days, because at last with you we have found that message of hope which earlier we felt obliged to seek travelling round the world. Now, being able to hear it at home is something very powerful for us. Above all, Father, may I say that this light has been lit in this place where we young people were really beginning to lose hope. Thank you, therefore, because it really has reached us. My question is this, Father: we, as you well know from your experience, have learned to experience, to coexist with many different kinds of poverty which are material poverty — I am thinking of the poverty of our twinning in Kenya — spiritual poverty — I am thinking of Romania, I am thinking of the injuries of political events, I am thinking of alcoholism. Therefore, Father, I would like to ask you: how can we young people live with this poverty? How should we behave?

Pope Francis: First of all I would like to say one thing to all you young people: do not let

yourselves be robbed of hope! Please, do not let yourselves be robbed of it! And who robs you of hope? The spirit of the world, wealth, the spirit of vanity, arrogance, pride. All these things steal hope from you. Where do I find hope? In the poor Jesus, Jesus who made himself poor for us. And you mentioned poverty. Poverty demands that we sow hope. It requires me to have greater hope, too. This seems a little hard to understand, but I remember that Fr Arrupe once wrote a good letter to the Centres for Social Research, The Society's Social Centres. He spoke of how the social problem must be studied. But in the end he told us, he said to all of us: "Look, it is impossible to talk about poverty without having an experience with the poor". You mentioned the twinning with Kenya: the experience with the poor. It is impossible to talk about poverty, about abstract poverty. That does not exist! Poverty is the flesh of the poor Jesus in this hungry child, in the sick person, in these unjust social structures. Go, look over there at the flesh of Jesus. But do not let yourselves be robbed of hope by well-being, by the spirit of well-being which, in the end brings you to become a nothing in life! The young must stake themselves on high ideals: this is my advice. But where do I find hope? In the flesh of the suffering Jesus and in true poverty. There is a connection between the two. Many thanks.

I now impart to all, to all of you, to your families, to everyone the Lord's blessing.