



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS  
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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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### **Audience with members of the Italian Parents' Association**

At midday today, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Associazione Italiana Genitori (AGE), the Italian Parents' Association, on the fiftieth anniversary of its founding.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

#### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am pleased to welcome all of you, representatives of the Associazione Italiana Genitori (AGE), the Italian Parents' Association, which celebrates its fiftieth birthday this year. An important achievement! It is a valuable opportunity to confirm the motivations of your commitment to the family and education: an effort you make in accordance with the principles of Christian ethics, so that the family may be an increasingly recognized subject and protagonist in social life.

Many of your energies are dedicated to accompanying and supporting parents in their educational task, especially with reference to school, which has always been the main partner of the family in the education of children. What you do in this field is truly meritorious. Today, in fact, when we talk about an educational alliance between school and family, we talk about it mainly to denounce its disappearance: the educational pact is in decline. The family no longer appreciates the work of teachers – often poorly paid – and the latter perceive the presence of parents in schools as an annoyance, ending up keeping them at the margins or considering them adversaries.

To change this situation, someone needs to take the first step, overcoming fear of the other and reaching out their hands generously. For this reason I invite you to cultivate and always nurture trust in school and teachers: without them you risk remaining alone in your educational activity and being less able to face the new educational challenges that come from contemporary culture, from society, from mass media, from new

technologies. Teachers, like you, are engaged every day in educational service to your children. While it may be right to complain about the possible limits of their action, it is our duty to esteem them as the most precious allies in the educational enterprise that you carry forward together. If I may, I will tell you an anecdote. I was ten years old, and I said something unpleasant to the teacher. She called my mother. The day after my mother came to school, and the teacher went to receive her; they spoke, then my mother called me, and in front of the teacher she rebuked me and said to me, "Apologize to the teacher", which I did. "Kiss the teacher", my mother said. And I did, and then I returned to the classroom, happy, and the story was over. No, it wasn't over... The second chapter was when I returned home... This is "collaboration" in the education of a child: between family and teachers.

Your responsible and willing presence, a sign of love not only for your children but for the good of all that characterizes school, will help to overcome many divisions and misunderstandings in this area, and to ensure that families are accorded their primary role in the education and instruction of children and young people. In fact, if you as parents need teachers, the school too needs you, and cannot achieve its goals without engaging in constructive dialogue with those who have the primary responsibility for the growth of their pupils. As the Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* points out, "Schools do not replace parents, but complement them. This is a basic principle: all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities in the name of the parents, between the family and society, with their consent and, to a certain degree, with their authorization" (84).

Your associative experience has certainly taught you to trust in mutual help. Let us remember the wise African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child". Therefore, in school education, collaboration between the various components of the educational community must never be lacking. Without frequent communication and without mutual trust, community is not built and without a community it is not possible to educate.

Helping to eliminate the educational solitude of the families is also the task of the Church, and I invite you always to feel that she is by your side in the mission of educating your children and making the whole of society a family-friendly place, so that each person may be welcomed, accompanied, guided towards true values and enabled to give the best of his- or herself for the growth of all. So you have a double strength: the one that comes from being an association, that is, people who unite not against someone but for the good of all, and the strength you receive from your bond with the Christian community, where you find inspiration, trust, and support.

Dear parents, children are the most precious gift you have received. Know how to safeguard this gift with commitment and generosity, leaving them the necessary freedom to grow and mature as people who in turn will one day be able to open themselves to the gift of life. The attention with which, as an association, you keep watch over the dangers that threaten the lives of children does not stop you from looking confidently to the world, knowing how to choose and indicate to your children the best opportunities for human, civil and Christian growth. Teach your children moral discernment, ethical discernment: this is good, this is not so good, and this is bad, so that they may know how to distinguish. But this is learned at home, and at school: together, both of them.

I thank you for this meeting and I warmly bless you, your families and the entire association. I assure you of my remembrance in prayer. And you too, please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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