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Video Message of the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the virtual Meeting organised by the Scholas Occurrentes Foundation

The following is the text of the video message sent by the Holy Father Francis at the end of the virtual meeting with young people, parents and teachers around the world organised by the Scholas Occurrentes Foundation, on World Environment Day:

Video Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters of Scholas:

Today, after all these years of sharing our founding issue, it is a great joy to be able to call us a “community”. A community of friends, a community of brothers and sisters.

I still remember its origin: two teachers, two professors, in the midst of a crisis, with a little craziness and a little intuition. Something unplanned, that took shape along the way.

When the crisis in that time left behind a land of violence, that education brought young people together, generating feeling and, therefore, generating beauty.

Three images of this journey come to my heart, three images that guided three years of reflection and encounter: the madman in Fellini’s “La Strada”, Caravaggio’s “The Calling of Matthew”, and Dostoyevsky’s “The Idiot”.

Meaning - the madman; the calling - Matthew - and Beauty.

The three stories are the story of a crisis. And in all three, most of all, human responsibility comes into play. Crisis originally means “rupture”, “tear”, “opening”, “danger”; but also “opportunity”.

When roots need space to continue growing, the pot that holds them ends up breaking.

Life overall is bigger than our own life and therefore it breaks. But this is life! It grows, it breaks.

Poor humanity, without crises! Everything perfect, everything orderly, all neatly starched. Poor humanity. It would be, think about it, such a humanity would be a sick humanity, very sick. Thank God this doesn't happen. It would be a sedated humanity.

On the other hand, just as crisis led to our founding by calling us into the open, danger comes when we are not taught how to relate to that openness. This is why crises, if they are not well accompanied, are dangerous, as one can become disorientated. And it is wise counsel, even for small crises, personal, marital and social ones, "never to go into a crisis alone: go in company".

There, in crisis, we are invaded by fear, we close ourselves off as individuals, or we begin to repeat what is convenient for very few, emptying ourselves of meaning, covering up our own call, losing our beauty. This is what happens when one goes through a crisis alone, without reservation. This beauty that, as Dostoevsky said, will save the world.

Scholas was born of a crisis, but it did not raise its fists to fight against the culture, nor did it shrug its shoulders in resignation, or run away crying: "What a calamity, what terrible times!" Instead it went out to listen to the heart of the young, to cultivate the new reality. "This isn't working? Let's look somewhere else".

Scholas looks in through the cracks in the world - not just with the head but with the whole body, to see if another response comes back from this opening.

And this means educating. Either education involves listening, or it does not educate. Education creates culture, or it does not educate. Education teaches us to celebrate, or it does not educate.

Some might say to me, "But what do you mean? Isn't education about knowing things?" No. That is knowledge. But educating is listening, creating culture, celebrating.

And that is how Scholas grew.

Not even these two madmen - the founding fathers, we might say jokingly - imagined that that educational experience in the diocese of Buenos Aires, after twenty years would grow as a new culture, "poetically inhabiting this land", as Hölderlin taught us. Listening, creating and celebrating life. That new culture poetically inhabiting this land.

Harmonising the language of thought with feelings and actions. That is what you heard me say several times: the language of the head, of the heart and of the hands, synchronised. Head, heart and hands, growing harmoniously.

In Scholas I have seen Japanese teachers and students dancing with Colombians. It's impossible! Yet I saw them. I saw the young people of Israel playing with those of Palestine. I saw them. Students from Haiti thinking alongside those of Dubai. Children from Mozambique painting with children from Portugal... I saw, between East and West, an olive tree creating a culture of encounter.

Therefore, in this new crisis that humanity is facing today, where culture has been shown to have lost its vitality, I want to celebrate that Scholas, as a community that educates, as an intuition that grows, opens the doors of the *Universidad del Sentido*, the University of Meaning. Because to educate is to seek the meaning of things. It is to teach to look for the meaning of things.

Bringing together the dream of children and young people with the experience of adults and the elderly. This encounter must always take place as otherwise there is no humanity, because there are no roots, no history, no promise, no growth, no dreams, no prophecy.

Students from all situations, of languages and beliefs, because no one is left out when what is taught is not one thing only, but Life. The same life that originates and will always originate other worlds. Different worlds, unique, as we are also. In our deepest pains, joys, desires and nostalgia. Worlds of Gratuitousness, of Meaning, and of Beauty. “The Idiot”, the “Calling” of Caravaggio and the madman in “*La Strada*”.

Never forget these last three words: gratuitousness, meaning and beauty. They may seem useless, especially nowadays. Who starts a business looking for gratuitousness, meaning and beauty? They do not produce, they does not produce. And yet, the whole of humanity, the future, depend upon on these things that seem useless.

Go ahead, take that mystique that was given away, that no one invented; and the first to be surprised were these two madmen who founded it. And that is why they give it away, they give it away, because it is not theirs. It is something that came to them as a gift. Keep on sowing and reaping, with a smile, with risk, but all together and always hand in hand, to overcome any crisis.

May God bless you. And please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you very much.