

HOLY SEE ON EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY

"A True Humanism ... Can and Should Allow the Presence of Foreign Students"

ROME, JULY 3, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a greeting sent from the president and secretary of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers to the members of the Service of European Churches for International Students. The group will meet this week in Namur, Belgium.

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As you gather together once again for your annual meeting, I am delighted to send you my greetings and good wishes for your deliberations.

Today Educational mobility within the world's universities is ever on the increase having grown almost three fold since 1975. The development of funding and scholarships for third world countries, together with the emergences of China and other Asian countries is set to change the patterns of movement of international students and professors hitherto not experienced. In particular the development of a 'European Higher Education Area' through the Bologna Agreement and an extension of existing exchange schemes and programmes will have effects beyond the borders of Europe itself. These are both interesting and exciting times for the development of tertiary education. Moreover, recent projections put the global number of international students set to rise from 3 million in 2010 to 7.2 million in 2025.

The topic you have chosen for your meeting, "Language of faith and language of Sciences, a challenge for international students in a market driven economy" is an important one that goes to the heart of the Church's pastoral mission within universities. Your particular concentration with the specific pastoral care offered towards foreign students in Europe can help to open up this significant topic between the relationship of faith and reason and a particular vision in the formation of young adults. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council reminds us that the future of humanity "is in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and optimism".[1]

Pope John Paul II, in his important Encyclical "*Fides et Ratio*"[2] explains that truth is known through a combination of both faith and reason. The absence of either one will diminish man's ability to know himself, the world and God.[3] Human reason, he wrote, seeks the truth, but the ultimate truth about the meaning of life cannot be found by reason alone.[4] The search for knowledge - the search for the meaning of life - is essentially a search for God. This search, at its best, is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and responds to his calling. The honest searcher learns from others, as for example a philosopher learns from a scientist, taking into account his own point of

view. Indeed, the same learning should mark the relations between philosopher and theologian.

Part of the mission of those who have both academic and pastoral responsibility in the student world should be to foster collaboration between not only different disciplines but also cultures. It is in this way that a true 'humanism' can grow. Pope Benedict XVI knows only too well of this need when he said recently:

"I want to stress the importance of the education of young intellectuals and of scientific and cultural exchanges between universities in order to propose and enliven integral human development....In this context I have entrusted to you in spirit, dear young people, the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* in which we recall the urgent need to shape a new humanistic vision." [5]

In order for there to be 'love in truth', the Pope asks for an "authentic human development" calling for a new humanism that as a "fruitful dialogue between faith and reason cannot but render the work of charity more effective within society." [6] In fact it is only in a dialogue between 'the language of science and the language of faith' that we can properly arrive at the truth. Indeed the truth is embedded, waiting to be discovered, so that each human person may come to their fullest potential. For, as Pope John Paul II reminds us,

"The truth and everything that is true represents a great good to which we must turn with love and joy. Science too is a way to truth; for God's gift of reason, which according to its nature is destined not for error, but for the truth of knowledge, is developed in it." [7]

The danger that education can be reduced to a mere functionalism, rather than being in essence a search for the truth, is particularly present for many foreign students, principally if their return is linked to future economic and industrial productivity. A true humanism pervading academic pursuit can and should allow the presence of foreign students - along with students of host countries - to bring a richness and diversity that should be at the heart of the university fostering an education that touches the whole of a person. Moreover, in this search for and the living out of discovered truths and the dialogue between science and faith also has positive repercussions for the mission of the Church as Pope Benedict XVI reminds us:

"The dialogue between faith and reason, religion and science, does not only make it possible to show people of our time the reasonableness of faith in God as effectively and convincingly as possible, but also to demonstrate that the definitive fulfilment of every authentic human aspiration rests in Jesus Christ. In this regard, a serious evangelizing effort cannot ignore the questions that arise also from today's scientific and philosophical discoveries." [8]

I would like also to mention, having now passed this last year which has been dedicated to priests, the work of fostering vocations with university communities. The opening up of individuals, to one another and to God, is part of the process of the vocational search to find the purpose God has for a person in their life. The search for truth must also be one for the truth about ourselves and God's call. The encouragement for all to discover the will of God and, for those for whom it is

discerned, a specific call for the priesthood, should never be absent. Moreover it should be a prominent and frequent cause for deliberation and reflection, including those who are foreign students.

As you embark upon your symposium, be assured of our prayers and support. I am confident that your work will bear much fruit, and that aided by the prayers of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, the Lord will bless you abundantly in this encounter.

☒ Antonio Maria Vegliò

President

☒ Agostino Marchetto

Archbishop Secretary

From the Vatican, 1st July 2010

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[NOTES]

[1] Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 31: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

[2] Cf. Pope John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, September 1998: <http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0216/INDEX.HTM>

[3] Ibid., no.16.

[4] Ibid., no.42.

[5] Pope Benedict XVI, Address on the occasion of the Marian Prayer Vigil "with Africa and for Africa", Saturday 10th October 2009: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20091010_rosario-africa_en.html

[6] ID., Encyclical Letter "Caritas in Veritate", June 2009, No. 57: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html

[7] John Paul II, Science and faith in the search for truth, Address to teachers and university students in Cologne Cathedral, November 15, 1980: <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~nmcenter/sci-cp/sci80111.html>

[8] Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the participants of the Plenary assembly of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, 10th February 2006: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060210_doctrine-faith_en.html

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