



The Holy See

VIDEO MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS FOR THE SCHOLAS OCCURRENTES IN BUENOS AIRES

[Multimedia]

Dear young people of Scholas, gathered here today:

I want to celebrate with you this encounter, this meeting of people: each one of you is a person. An encounter of different creeds, countries, languages, realities; an encounter of different identities, because in order to meet you have to be sure of your own identity. You cannot negotiate your identity to meet the other, you can not make up your identity, you can not disguise it, because life is not a carnival, it is something very serious. And a meeting has to be serious, with great joy, but serious from the heart.

The word *identity* is not easy. And it is the question, “who am I?”. And it is one of the most important questions one can ask: in front of oneself, before others, before God, before history. Who I am?

It is the question that goes along with the question about the meaning of life, who I am and what meaning my life has. But beware, is not a question to dispose of to respond quickly and forget. It is a question to always keep in mind, always. And keep it open, keep it close to you: who am I?

Our identity is not a given data, it is not a factory number, it is not information that I can look up on the internet, to know who I am. We are not something totally defined, established. We are in process, we are growing, and that nucleus of identity is growing, growing, and we are journeying; we are growing in our own style, with our own history, with that core of our own identity. We are witnesses, we are editors and readers of our lives and we are not the only authors: we are what God dreams for us, what we tell ourselves, what we recount, what others tell us we are, as long as we are faithful. Faithful to our personal integrity, faithful to our inner nobility, faithful to a word that

people are afraid of: faithful to *coherence*. There are no laboratory identities, none. Every identity has a history. And as it has a history, it has ownership. My identity comes from a family, a village, a community. You can not talk about identity without talking about belonging. Identity is belonging. Belong to something that transcends me, something that is bigger than you.

The danger, so present in these times, is when an identity forgets its roots, forgets where it comes from, forgets its history, does not open to the difference of current coexistence; when one sees the other with fear, as an enemy, and that is how war begins. Just grab the daily newspaper or watch the news: war is small at first, almost imperceptible, but by the end it is great and terrible.

Therefore, so that identity does not become violent, does not become authoritarian, does not become a denier of difference, there is a constant need for encounter with the other, for dialogue, for growth in encounter, and for the memory of one's own belonging. What are my roots? Where do I come from? What is the culture of my people? There are no abstract identities. Well, there is one, which is the identity card, a document. But that does not work, that does not make you grow. At most, it means you are calm when security personnel ask you for your papers: "Good, go ahead". There are no laboratory identities, no static identities. Who am I? Let us ask again, all of us. Let us get back on track, and grow on the road, with memory, with dialogue, with belonging and with hope. And so, we will enrich ourselves more each day.

Identity is belonging. Please, take care of it, take care of your own property. Do not be fooled. Take care of your own property. And so, when we see people among us who do not respect anything. How many times have we heard: "Do not trust him, he would sell his mother". Each one of you, ask yourself: Do I sell my heritage? Do I sell the history of my people? Do I sell the culture of my people? Do I sell my culture and what I have received from my family? Do I sell the consistency of my life? Do I sell the dialogue with my brother, even if I have different ideas, or do I pretend to engage in dialogue? Do not sell our deepest aspect, that is, our belonging, our identity, which in journeying encounters different identities, which enrich each other, creating brotherhood.

I want to thank all those who made this meeting possible: parents and teachers, for allowing and accompanying; authorities, for opening the door and enabling the experience; Bort schools and all religious communities for enriching, with their diversity, the history of this meeting and of each person. And I thank you, young people of *Scholas*, for letting life tell you a new chapter with every step. Do not be afraid of that. For encouraging you to mix your languages, open your stories without renouncing them, let yourself be rewritten by the other, by the different, by the stranger, always being different and, at the same time, increasingly being yourselves. And making your identity, the heritage you have received, into a work of art. This is what I wish for you. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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