



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
FROM THE SEIBU GAKUEN BUNRI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
OF SAITAMA, TOKYO (JAPAN)*

*St Damasus Courtyard in the Vatican
Wednesday, 21 August 2013*

The Holy Father

Good morning!

It is quite clear that you understand Italian!...

I welcome you! Your visit gives me pleasure. I hope that this journey will be very fruitful for you because becoming acquainted with other people and other cultures always is always good for us, it makes us grow.

And why does this happen? It is because if we isolate ourselves we have only what we have, we cannot develop culturally; but, if we seek out other people, other cultures, other ways of thinking, other religions, we go out of ourselves and start that most beautiful adventure which is called “dialogue”.

Dialogue is very important for our own maturity, because in confronting another person, confronting other cultures, and also confronting other religions in the right way, we grow; we develop and mature.

There is of course a danger. If during dialogue someone closes himself in and grows angry he may start a fight; there is the danger of conflict and this is not good, because we talk to each other to find ourselves and not in order to quarrel.

And what is the deepest approach we should have in order to dialogue and not quarrel? Meekness, the ability to encounter people, to encounter cultures peacefully; the ability to ask intelligent questions: “But why do you think like this? Why does this culture do this?”. Listening to others and then speaking. First listening, then speaking. All this is *meekness*. And if you do not think in the same way as I do — but you know... I think in a different way than you, and you do not convince me — and yet we are friends, I have understood how you think and you have understood how I think.

And do you know something, something important? This dialogue is what creates peace. It is impossible for peace to exist without dialogue. All the wars, all the strife, all the unsolved problems over which we clash are due to a lack of dialogue. When there is a problem, talk: this makes peace. This is what I hope for you in this journey of dialogue: that you come to know how to dialogue; how does this culture think? How lovely that is! I don't like this — but in dialogue. This is how we develop. This is my wish for you and I also wish you a good visit in Rome.

I wish you the very best, for yourselves, for your school and for your families. God bless you all!
Thank you.

A girl

We are happy to have had the chance to meet you and to listen to your words: we shall now put what we heard you say into practice in our lives. We would also like to thank you for having granted us a little of your valuable time.