



The Holy See

VIDEO CONFERENCE VIA THE INTERNET OF POPE FRANCIS WITH THE STUDENTS OF THE SCHOLAS SOCIAL NETWORK GATHERED FROM FIVE CONTINENTS

Synod Hall

Thursday, 4 September 2014

“I hope that you have planted well, so the fruit will be good. Thanks for your efforts”. Pope Francis thus opened a videoconference in which students from five countries asked him questions in both Spanish and English. The Pope listened to the youth who are active in Scholas and responded in Spanish to their questions. The following is a synthesis of the questions and the English translation of the Pope’s responses.

The first question came from Cameron, a student at St Joseph’s College in Queensland, Australia, who recounted his experience at the institute and asked how new communication technology might bridge the gaps between youth and society.

Thank you. Thanks also for what you told me that you and all of you do. I will try to respond to your question. How can *Scholas* utilize this technology and build bridges? Before answering you, I will use the phrase you used: “build bridges”. In life you can do two contrary things: build bridges or build walls. Walls separate, they divide. Bridges connect. I’ll answer your question: what can you do? You can continue to communicate among yourselves, communicate your experiences, the experiences of what you do. You have much in your heart. You are accomplishing many things. This was what you said when you introduced yourself, communicate it so that others may be inspired and listen to what the others tell you, and no one is in charge of this communication but everything works. It is spontaneity in life, it is saying “yes” to life. To communicate is to give, communicating is generosity, communicating is respect, communicating is avoiding all discrimination. Move forward kids. I like what you are doing. May God bless you.

Next was Eyal from Israel, who attends La Salle school south of Tel Aviv. He spoke about his

experience in a school with Jewish, Christian and Muslims students.

Thanks. I see that you are making good progress and you know how to communicate among yourselves in various languages and starting from your religious identity. This is beautiful. What would you like to ask me?

Eyal asked the Holy Father to return to the Holy Land, in Israel.

I would like to return. I was there a few months ago and I was very pleased to come... yes, I was very pleased to come.

Sina from Istanbul, Turkey, had a more pressing question. In her voice were the echoes of the violence that recently disrupted her country and of the tragedies that are taking place just a few steps from her house. "What will the future bring?", she asked.

Thank you for the question, and thanks for your reflection on how young people don't want war, you want peace. You must shout this from your heart, from the inside: "We want peace!" from the inside.

Your question: will the future be better or worse? I don't have a wizard's crystal ball to tell the future. But I will tell you one thing: do you know where the future is? It is in your heart. It is in your mind and in your hands. If you feel good, if you think hard and if you carry forward these good thoughts and good feelings with your hands, the future will be better. The future is for young people. But please note, young people with two qualities: young people with wings and young people with roots. Young people with wings to fly, dream, create, and with roots to receive the wisdom that the elderly give. Therefore the future is in your hands, if you have wings and roots. Take the courage to have wings, to dream of good things, to dream of a better world, to protest wars. On the other hand, to respect the wisdom that you have received from those who are older than you, your parents, your grandparents, the elderly of your country. The future is in your hands. Take the opportunity to make it better.

Cristian from Eastern Cape in South Africa asked the Pope where the idea for this organization was born.

Scholas was born... I was about to say by chance, but no, it wasn't by chance. It came from a man present here, José María de Corral, with the help of Enrique Palmeiro. *Scholas* began like this: by building an *escuela de vecinos* [neighbourhood school] in the diocese of Buenos Aires. In addition to the schools, a network of *escuelas de vecinos* in order to build bridges between the schools in Buenos Aires. And it has built many bridges, many bridges, even transoceanic bridges. It began as something small, as a hope, as something which we didn't know whether it would succeed, and today we are able to communicate among ourselves. Why? Because we are convinced that young

people need to communicate among themselves, they need to display their values and to share their values. Youth today are in need of three fundamental pillars: education, sport and culture. For this reason, *Scholas* brings everything together. We organized a football match. The schools are also doing this and they also organize cultural events. Education, sport and culture. Let's move forward so that nations can create job opportunities for these young people, supported by education, sport and culture. Sport is important because it teaches teamwork. Sport prevents selfishness, it helps us not to be selfish. Therefore it is important to work in groups, study in groups and follow the path of life in a group. As you can see, your question did not frighten me. Thank you very much for having asked it. Go forth on this path of communication, of building bridges, of seeking peace by way of education, sport and culture. Thanks.

The Pope spoke with Ernesto from the barrio of La Campanera in El Salvador. Ernesto spoke about his country's efforts to improve education and training.

I thank you for the greeting from your neighbourhood, from your country and from your friends. I know of the work that you are doing in El Salvador. José María spoke to me about it. I know that you have made quite a bit of progress and that you are working hard in education, but remember what I said to your friend from South Africa: education, sport and culture. Be mindful of the *maras* [violent gangs] because, as bridges exist to bring you together, communications also exist to destroy. Be very careful of these groups who try to destroy, who seek war and do not know how to work as a team. Defend yourselves and others, as a team, as a group; work hard at this. I know that you are working very well and you are well supported. I know that the Ministry for Education supports you. Move forward on this path of teamwork and protect yourselves against those who want to destroy you and take away the strength of the group. God bless you.

In conclusion the moderator of the meeting asked the Pope what his message is for young people all over the world.

Something that isn't mine, Jesus said it many times: "Do not be afraid". In my country we have an expression which I don't know how to translate in English: "No se arruguen". Do not be afraid, go forward, build bridges of peace, play on a team, and make the future better. Remember that the future is in your hands. Dream of the future flying, but do not forget the heritage of culture and religion and wisdom that the elderly have left you. Go forth with courage. Create the future!

by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 37, 12 September 2014

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