



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN PARENTS ASSOCIATION

Paul VI Hall

Friday, 7 September 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

I am pleased to welcome all of you, representatives of age, the *Associazione Italiana Genitori*, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. A great accomplishment! It is an important occasion to confirm the motivation of your commitment in favour of the family and of education: a commitment you fulfil according to principles of Christian ethics, so that the family may be increasingly appreciated and a protagonist in social life.

Much of your energy is dedicated to accompanying and supporting parents in their educational task, especially with regard to school, which has always been the primary partner of families in educating their children. What you do in this field is truly commendable. Today, in fact, when the educational alliance between school and family is addressed, it is spoken of, in particular, to voice complaints: the educational pact is in decline. The family no longer appreciates, as it once did, the work of the often underpaid teachers, and they regard the presence of parents in their schools as an annoying invasion, and end up keeping them at the margins or considering them adversaries.

To improve this situation someone must take the first step, overcoming fear of the other and extending a hand with generosity. For this reason I invite you to always foster and cultivate trust with regard to school and teachers: without them you run the risk of conducting your educational task alone and of being less and less able to face the new educational challenges that come from contemporary culture, from society, from the mass media, from new forms of technology. Like you, teachers are committed each day in educational service to your children. If it is fair to complain of the potential limitations of their work, it is fitting that they be appreciated as your most valuable

allies in the educational undertaking which you carry out together. Allow me to tell you an anecdote. I was 10 years old, and I said something bad to the teacher. The teacher called my mother. The next day my mother came, and the teacher went to welcome her; they spoke, then my mother called me and, in front of the teacher, she scolded me and said: "Apologize to the teacher". I did. "Kiss the teacher", my mother told me, and I did. And then I went back to the classroom happy, and the episode was over. No, it was not over. The second chapter was when I went home.... This is called "cooperation" in educating a child: between the family and the teachers.

Your responsible and helpful presence, a sign of love not only for your children but toward that universal resource that is the school, will help overcome many divisions and misunderstandings in this sphere, and ensure that families be appreciated for their primary role in the upbringing and education of children and young people. Indeed, as you parents need teachers, the school also needs you and cannot meet its objectives without establishing a constructive dialogue with those who have the primary responsibility for the advancement of its students. As the Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* recalls, "schools do not replace parents, but complement them. This is a basic principle: 'all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities in the name of the parents, with their consent and, to a certain degree, with their authorization'" (n. 84).

Your experience as an association has surely taught you to rely on mutual cooperation. Let us recall the wise African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child". Therefore, in scholastic education there must never be a lack of cooperation among the various members of the educational community itself. Community is not built without regular communication and without mutual trust; and without community, one cannot educate.

Helping to eliminate the educational isolation of families is also the task of the Church. Thus, I invite you to feel that she is always beside you in the mission of educating your children and of making the whole of society a fitting place for families, so that each person may be welcomed, accompanied, oriented toward true values and empowered to give the best of him or herself for mutual advancement. Therefore you have a twofold strength: that which you derive from being an association, that is, people who join together not *against* someone but *for* the good of all, and the strength you receive from your bond with the Christian community, in which you find inspiration, confidence, support.

Dear parents, children are the most precious gift you have received. May you be able to safeguard it with commitment and generosity; allow the children the necessary freedom to develop and mature as people capable, in their turn, of one day opening themselves to the gift of life. As an association, may the attention you pay to the dangers that threaten the life of the littlest ones not prevent you from looking with confidence at the world, knowing how to choose and indicate to your children the best opportunities for human, civil and Christian growth. Teach your children moral

discernment, ethical discernment: what is good, what is not so good, and what is bad. So that they may know how to distinguish. But this is learned both at home and at school: together, jointly.

I thank you for this meeting and I wholeheartedly bless you, your families and the whole Association. I assure you of my remembrance in prayer. And you too, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!