



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING ORGANIZED BY THE
"TONIOLO YOUNG PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION"**

Clementine Hall

Friday, 12 January 2024

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

The collaboration of the Toniolo Institute with the Dicasteries of the Curia and the Pontifical Representations engaged with the United Nations is in its tenth year, and is very precious. Thank you, then, for your service and your effort, and thank you to all those who promote it and support it; I know that recently the Arvedi Foundation has participated in this project of fundamental importance, enabling the number of scholarships to be increased. Thank you.

It is good that each one of you can have the experience of contact with the Petrine ministry through work with the international institutions, and developing an experience of lived faith, of Christian life that confronts the current challenges of the world. But your presence does a great deal of good also to our institutions, to which you bring a breath of fresh air, the capacity to dream, the desire to look far ahead.

Today, instead, what some call “short-term thinking” seems to be spreading; “short-term thinking”, they call it: a thought made up of a few characters, that burns out immediately; a thought that does not look upwards and ahead, but at the here and now – just the here and now, the fruit of the needs of the moment; a thought that does not look back to history, that does not contain a historical legacy, a thought that moves by instinct and is measured in instants; that, made up of emotions and compressed into few words, seems to substitute the already “weak” thought of postmodernism. And this is the drama of postmodernism: weak thought. In the face of the

complexity of life and the world. This “brief” thought leads us to generalize and criticize, to simplify and retouch reality, in the pursuit of one’s own immediate interests rather than the good of others and of the future of everyone. I am concerned when I hear about young people barricaded behind a screen, barricaded behind a screen, with their eyes reflecting artificial lights rather than letting their creativity shine. Yes, because to be young is not to think you hold the world in your hand, but to get your hands dirty for the world; it is having in front of you a life to spend, not to conserve or archive.

I see you and I think that your passion and your commitment are antidotes to short-term thinking; because, contrary to the temptation to settle for passing things, you have in mind to cultivate a high view, that looks to the stars, not the dust. It is the true outlook of the young. But many of them seem, if you will allow me the expression, “squeezed”: made the object of ever more demanding performances, they risk seeing the juice of life, that restless dream that demands to be released from their hearts, dry up. To dream restlessly... I ask you, but do not answer aloud: do you dream? Do you have restlessness in your thought, in your heart? Are you restless or are you already “young pensioners”? Do not forget: dream restlessly. It is sad to see young people passive and anaesthetized, lying on sofas instead of involved in schools and on the streets, bent over their screens instead of a book or a brother in need. It is sad. Young people who are professionals on the outside and dull on the inside, who, drained by duty, take refuge in the pursuit of pleasure. We all need the creativity and zeal that only you young people can give us: creativity and zeal are in your hands, your thirst for truth, your cry of peace, your intuition about the future – we need these things! – and your hopeful smiles. I would like to say to you: take this where you work, putting yourselves on the line fearlessly. Put yourselves on the line. Because the young are the levers that renew systems, not the cogs that must keep them running.

So, do not withhold the good that you are, do not be afraid of taking risks. Please, risk, risk, if you do not take risks, who will? Take risks, because it is by giving yourselves that you will discover you are gifts, unique and precious gifts. In the western context we live surrounded by gifts and presents, by many, often useless, things, immersed in manmade products that make us lose our wonder at the beauty that surrounds us. Think a bit: have I lost the capacity for awe? Wonder... when a young person loses the capacity for awe, for wonder, he or she is already a pensioner, a pensioner. Creation, rather, invites us to be in turn *creators of harmony and beauty*, to emerge from dependence on the virtual, on the hypnotic word of *social media* that anaesthetizes the soul, to offer something new and beautiful to others. A quest that fascinates you, a prayer that comes from the heart, an enquiry that moves you, a page that you give to others, a dream to be realized, a gesture of love for those who cannot reciprocate... This is creating, assimilating the style with which God made the world, the style of *gratuitousness*, the style of *gratuitousness*, which brings you out of the logic of “I do in order to have” and “I work in order to earn”. Creative in order to open glimpses of newness in a world that is content with profits. In this way you will be revolutionaries. In this way you will be revolutionaries.

Life asks to be given, not managed. Life is for giving. Life asks to be given, not managed. The witness of Blessed Giuseppe Toniolo, who drew the beauty of living from faith and fearlessly confronted the problems of his time to give the economy a human face, can help you in this. It is good that you too allow yourselves to be challenged by reality, rediscovering and rethinking faith so as to draw from it untold riches for a better future.

I would like to crystallize these ideas around an urgent theme, the theme of peace. A look at today makes that aspiration to the good, to concord, to peaceful coexistence between peoples, of which diplomatic activity has always been a vehicle, seem distant. And yet so much diplomacy seems to have forgotten its nature as a resource required to bridge the ever-deepening chasm of the relations between nations. We see it chasing after events without that preventive force, that dreaming-dialogue-risking for peace that curbs recourse to weapons. And wars are thus the fruit of prolonged relations of force, without a precise beginning and without a certain end. But where are the bold ventures, the daring visions? And from whom can they come, if not from young and fearless hearts, which welcome the good within themselves and grasp the Gospel as it is, to write new pages of fraternity and hope?

How many other aspects, such as the economy, the fight against hunger, the production and trade of arms, the climate question, communication, the world of work, and many others, are in need of renewal and creativity? I entrust to you these dreams of an elderly man who is thrilled to see your young faces; and I think of how much more thrilled he is to see Jesus there, He who always has a young heart and who called young people to follow Him. In Him I renew my thanks for your service and bless you. And I ask you, please, to pray for me every day.

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