



The Holy See

**GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE DELEGATION OF THE
INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION "MERRIMACK COLLEGE",
IN MASSACHUSETTS**

Clementine Hall

Friday, 10 May 2024

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I offer a warm greeting to the President and to all of you here present. I am pleased that we have this opportunity to meet.

For almost eighty years, Merrimack College has sought to educate young people by drawing inspiration from the Augustinian principle of “cultivating knowledge in order to attain wisdom”. This aim is also reflected in the College’s motto: “*per scientiam ad sapientiam*” (cf. SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, 13.19.24). In the light of your history, I would like briefly to reflect with you on this mission, and specifically on two interrelated aspects: educating young people to *face challenges* in order to *grow in solidarity*.

First, educating to *face challenges*. Here we do well to recall the circumstances in which the Augustinian Fathers founded the College in 1947 for the benefit of soldiers returning from the Second World War. Clearly, for those young men who had experienced the trauma and the brutality of war, more was needed than academic instruction alone. It was necessary to restore in them a sense of meaning, hope and confidence for the future, to enrich their minds, but also to warm their hearts and restore hope for a brighter future. In a word, it was necessary to offer them, through their studies and their life in the College community, a solid education and a new start. As I like to say, all education passes from the mind to the heart and from the heart to the hands.

Three languages: the language of the mind, the language of the heart, and the language of the hands. The ability to think what we feel and do; the ability to feel what we think and do; and the ability to do what we feel and think.

I mention this because, like those first students, our young people today are faced with “multiple crises of different kinds: economic, financial, labour; political, environmental and values; demographic and migratory” (CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating To Fraternal Humanism*, 2017, 3). Now, as in the past, it is important that they be taught to face challenges together, not letting themselves be overwhelmed, but rather responding in such a way that every crisis, even when it proves painful, can be transformed into an opportunity for growth.

This brings me to my second point, educating to *grow in solidarity*. Pope Benedict XVI observed that “it is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love” (*Spe Salvi*, 26). Here too, there is a need to train new generations to view difficulties as opportunities, and to aim for a future, not so much of wealth and success, as of love, building a humanism grounded in a spirit of solidarity (cf. *Message for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education*, 12 September 2019). This means teaching them to identify and direct the resources at hand, by creative planning, toward models of personal and social life marked by justice and mercy, in order to “give everyone an acceptable and dignified existence” (CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating To Fraternal Humanism*, 2017, 6).

In this regard, it is true that today’s process of globalization has its negative aspects, such as isolation, marginalization and the “throwaway culture”. At the same time, however, it also has its positive aspects, such as the potential to expand solidarity and to promote equality thanks to hitherto unknown means and possibilities; we have seen this happen in recent times in cases of climate disasters and wars. It is important, in every aspect of education, to guide students toward this kind of capacity for discernment and decision, extending the walls of classrooms, in theory and practice, to reach all those places where “education can generate solidarity, sharing, communion” (ibid, 10).

Dear friends, this is your responsibility, and it is a great one. I thank all of you for the valuable work you do and I give you my heartfelt blessing, entrusting you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and Saint Augustine. I ask you too, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you!