

Jubilee of the World of Education: Education is Hope and Peace

A time of grace, a time of renewal. An invitation to rediscover the beauty and responsibility of education, which is always an act of hope. The celebrations presided over by Pope Leo XIV will open and close the Jubilee of World Education, which will culminate in the proclamation of St John Henry Newman as Doctor of the Church.

A compass for the days of the Jubilee

Not only transmitting knowledge, but performing an act of accompaniment and love, because those who educate sow seeds in hearts. This is what educators and students will experience in the spaces of the Educational Village.

Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, emphasised three key points in his presentation of the Jubilee. The first is that the Second Vatican Council's declaration, *Gravissimum Educationis*, whose 60th anniversary is celebrated on 28 October, will serve as the backdrop for these days of prayer and reflection. And precisely for this anniversary, the cardinal noted, a document from Pope Leo XIV is expected that will reflect on the relevance of the Conciliar Declaration promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 28 October 1965.

The Global Compact on Education

This Jubilee, as the Prefect emphasised, will also be an opportunity to relaunch and enrich the Global Compact on Education, an initiative promoted by Pope Francis. During the conference, the representative of the Compact, Father Ezio Lorenzo Bono, spoke on this topic, highlighting that three more objectives will be added to the seven already established: artificial intelligence, disarming and disarming peace, and education for the interior life.

"The Holy Father," Cardinal Mendonça then declared, "has decided to associate the Jubilee of Education with the figure of an extraordinary educator and great inspiration for the philosophy of education: St. John Henry Newman. He will be declared a Doctor of the Church during the celebration on 1 November." The saint will also be named co-patron of the Church's educational mission, together

with St. Thomas Aquinas.

Starting with these jubilee days, the goal is “to inaugurate a new era that involves educational constellations with a new spirit and vision, inviting them to become true maps of hope in today’s world,” explained the prefect. He concluded: “Education is the new name for peace and puts hope on the map of the present and the future.”

The programme

Among the numerous events planned — and detailed by Archbishop Carlo Maria Polvani, secretary of the Dicastery for Culture and Education — there will also be some activities presented by Cardinal Peter Turkson, chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, who spoke about the Jubilee of Knowledge. This event will be held as part of the Jubilee of Education and will focus on the theme of ecology.

The Jubilee of Education will open with a Holy Mass presided over by Pope Leo XIV on 27 October. The following day *will mark the anniversary of Gravissimum Educationis*. On the 29th, the exhibition “*Living, Believing, Looking at this Sky*” by Tommaso Spazzini Villa will open. On Thursday, 30 October, the Pope will meet with students in the Paul VI Hall, while the international conference entitled “Educational Constellations: A Pact with the Future” will be held in the Auditorium della Conciliazione.

And again, on the 30th and 31st, *La Scuola del Cuore* (The School of the Heart) will be held in the Church of San Lorenzo in Piscibus, and the Constellations of Educational Networks will be held in the Hall of St. Pius X. On the 31st, the Pontiff will meet with educators.

Catholic education in the world

A detailed report on the state of Catholic education worldwide. Elena Beccalli, rector of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and president of the Federation of European Catholic Universities (FUCE), presented it during the conference. There are many noteworthy aspects, including a starting point: the Catholic education system is the largest in the world.

According to data from the Central Statistical Office of the Catholic Church in the Holy See, this network includes more than 231,000 schools and universities,

active in 171 countries. The professor highlighted that 72 million students attend Catholic schools and universities. Among the continents, Africa is the beating heart of educational provision, with the highest number of enrolments. “In an era marked by deep polarisation and growing inequality,” Beccalli observed, “education can and must be one of the most effective and transformative levers for promoting global integral human development.”

However, there are also alarming statistics in the general sphere: 61 million children worldwide have never entered school and 160 million young people do not complete secondary education. The rector emphasised that the apostolic exhortation *Dilexi te* emphasises the role of education, echoing the words of Pope Francis, who insisted on considering it one of the highest expressions of Christian charity.

“Pope Leo XIV,” she said, “recalled, through a historical reinterpretation, the central role that the Church plays in education.” And she quoted the words of the Pontiff: “The education of the poor, for the Christian faith, is not a favour, but a duty.”

Finally, the professor highlighted another striking figure: according to UNESCO, in order to achieve national goals in low- and middle-income countries, the annual funding *gap* is approximately \$97 billion until 2030. In 2024, global military spending reached \$2.718 billion. These figures should give us pause for thought.

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