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Thoughts on Europe and the Future of the Family

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www.alivetotheworld.org/en/

Good morning!

It is an honor to have been invited to address this wonderful gathering

My emphasis will be upon the vital importance of children and adolescents at this particular time in history.

Our attention must be on them, not only because the future is theirs, but also because they are the ones who must form that future. A wit once said “The future belongs to those who show up for it” which is indeed very true. And so, those who have spoken here concerning the deplorable demographics of Italy and of Europe, must be heard and heeded. We do need children if Italy and Europe are to have a future, as such.

But beyond that basic consideration, there is a more striking reality: the demographics of the next few decades guarantee that because the children and adolescents of today will be a much smaller workforce and under severe constraints, they will need extraordinary strength and dedication to their own families and to their country. Life will be extremely difficult, and they will need the stamina and the grit to survive and to have families at all.

And so, it is my conviction as we look ahead, that it is our duty to prepare them well for the huge challenges that they will inevitably face.

The most recent decades have seen an ever-diminishing level of faith, of family and of adherence to the universal values that made human community living possible and ever-developing. Since World War II, and particularly the 1960’s, standards of behavior and what is expected of young people have continually gone down. We cannot blame the children, nor really the parents.

This has been a cultural decline, apparent in all spheres: education and instruction, manners, discipline, and even music and art, in general. Whatever the causes, whether the World Wars, or new ideologies, the fact is that young people are more and more adrift, and feeling there is less and less to live for. Immediate material well-being is the only goal.

Marriages are down, and the challenge of having children seems difficult and even impossible to many young people today.

But all of this that they are seeing and feeling is a mirage. In fact, there is just as much to live for as ever! Happiness is found in relationships and, as proven scientifically by Viktor Frankl, in doing good. Doing things right, rising to challenges, giving oneself to others and seeing the good that one does. These two things: right relationships and a sense of purpose, have always been what make life worth living for, and together they have seen our ancestors through many terrible times in history. They gave them the courage to start new families and to rebuild their countries.

What our children and adolescents require is to once again be introduced to the values and virtues that their forebears were raised upon. Perseverance, loyalty, generosity, authority – both wielding it and obeying it – and above all, integrity. And how to live all of these in a counter-culture.

In our beautiful Venezuela, all of this has been illustrated for the world to see and understand. The richest country imaginable, with a population intelligent and simpatico, with generous ingredients of talented European immigrants, has collapsed into abject poverty. Why? Because those values and virtues little by little were forgotten and replaced with less noble goals. Corruption in government was tolerated as long as the economy grew. The economy grew tremendously, and many enormous fortunes were made. But those governments, and those who voted for them, did not notice the huge growth of the shanty towns, lacking basic needs of water and drainage.

Those governments wished to control politically the education of the population and those who voted for them did not insist that the standard be of the highest. After 40 years of so-called democracy, which in fact was ‘particracy’ and then became ‘kleptocracy’, we found we had a population so ignorant of how a country should be run that they elected a very disturbed but charismatic communist who promised all that anyone could dream of. Marxist populism took 20 more years to destroy the country and finally reduce the population to begging for change.

That change will come, inevitably, but it will all happen again if the young of today are not given the insights, the knowledge, the desire and the skills to assume their important roles in the structures of their country, and the clarity to discern how to elect their leaders, rejecting false promises.

Seeing this terrible situation building, some of us in Venezuela realised we needed new elements in education. We have been working actively in this sense for 17 years, and we are actually making in-roads. There is now a sizable number of young people who have learned a new way of seeing reality.

The essence of our programme is revealed in its title *[Alive to the World](#)*. It offers an attractive course for all 13 years of the school curriculum. It is ‘secular’ with no religious connotation. It is basically a continuous story of a group of kids growing from childhood to adulthood, where the characters grow at the same pace as the students. As the characters at each age encounter the

universal situations of school, family and community, the students can understand good choices and bad, and learn to adopt the attitudes and actions of a successful and productive life.

The advantage of this approach is that it gives young people not only knowledge, but also motivation and skills. It took 20 years to develop but is now giving great fruits.

My wish is that Italy would see the need to prepare the new generation and adopt this method, as has the Hungarian government and dynamic groups in France, England, Germany, Rumania and Poland. You can see all about it at www.Alivetotheworld.org

Thank you for your attention, and please pray for the young of Venezuela who will have to rebuild their country. May they lead the way with a solid conviction that life, family and country can be restored, building on the universal values.