Vatican

Pope Francis speaks with members of the Society of Swiss Students at the Vatican

Pope Francis speaks with members of the Society of Swiss Students at the Vatican Sept. 12, 2022. He encouraged them to thank God for the ability to go to school and study and urged them to assist young people in countries where access to education is limited. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

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Being able to go to school and study is a gift that not every young person in the world has and is something to thank God for, Pope Francis told a group of Swiss students.

Meeting the Society of Swiss Students at the Vatican Sept. 12, the pope asked the young people to promote the right of all people to study, working to help children in countries where access to school is limited and where girls and young women are allowed only a basic education.

More than 150 members of the Swiss group made a pilgrimage to Rome to mark the 75th anniversary of the canonization of St Nicholas of Flüe, the patron saint of Switzerland and also their association, which was founded by Catholic students in

the 1800s and opened to all students in the 1970s.

"There is a beautiful analogy between being a student and being a pilgrim," Francis told the group. "Studying is a journey."

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While specific forms of schooling "can and must have determined, well-defined times and objectives, so as not to end up creating eternal students, who never leave university," he said, a desire to learn should be a lifelong attitude.

In fact, he said, studying is "all the more noble and pleasurable the more it is free, gratuitous and not subject to aims of utility. In this sense, to be a student means to have a desire to learn, to know, not to consider oneself already arrived. To be on the way. To have the spirit of the disciple, always, at every age."

Francis also asked the students to make sure they do not neglect studying and praying with the Bible.

"You are people on a journey, on a quest, do you also feel that you are seekers of God?" he asked, encouraging them to be disciples of Jesus, "eager to listen to him, to ask him questions, to meditate on his words and deeds."