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Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, is seen at the U.N. headquarters in New Yo

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, is seen at the U.N. headquarters in New York City in this Sept. 28, 2019, file photo. (CNS photo/Brendan McDermid, Reuters)



by Catholic News Service

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During a U.N. education summit, the Vatican's secretary of state reiterated Pope Francis' pre-pandemic call that education is "one of the most effective ways of making our work and history more human."

Addressing the final day of the Transforming Education Summit Sept. 19, Cardinal Pietro Parolin described how the pope has been moved by "strong conviction that through education we can strive for a better world."

He said the pope has stressed the need to create an "educational village" in which all people "share the task of forming a network of open, human relationships" that overcome discrimination and allow people to flourish.

In addition, Parolin explained, the church has "always accompanied evangelization with the transmission of knowledge, culture and science" through a global network of nearly 220,000 schools and 1,365 universities in which 70 million students, including non-Catholics and non-Christians, are enrolled.

Months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pope launched the Global Compact on Education, explaining that education is "one of the most effective ways of making our world and history more human," the cardinal said.

Further, he continued, the work of educating young people must include multiple actors and international stakeholders "to rebuild the fragile educational alliance by introducing new generations to the values of respect, dialogue and solidarity through the investment of the best available resources in quality education."

He said Francis has invited educators to be guided by four pillars based on classical principles: know thyself, know thy neighbor, know creation and "know the "Transcendent, which affirms the human person's natural inclination toward the infinite, expanding our horizon and capacity to discover the great mysteries of life."

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"It is this tension toward the destiny and vocation of humanity which gives education its deeper meaning and convinces young people of its value," Parolin said.

To achieve such a holistic vision, the pope encouraged educational organizations to undertake seven paths.

These include reviewing how curricula and teaching plans ensure that the human person is the center of every educational endeavor; fostering full participation of girls and young women; and listening "to the voices of children and young people ... in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person."

Other paths involve seeing the family as "the first and essential place of education"; educating and being educated on the need for acceptance of and openness to the most vulnerable people; finding "new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth and progress that stand at the service" of each person and each family; and safeguarding and cultivating the earth so that it is protected from exploitation, in following the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and a circular economy.

The pandemic and the war in Ukraine and conflicts elsewhere, the Vatican official said, make the need for a "global educational pact ever more urgent."

"Education will help us to overcome the many existing fractures in our societies, building stronger and more resilient communities, based upon the values of human fraternity and mutual solidarity," he said.

The summit preceded the opening of the 77th U.N. General Assembly Sept. 20.