

Dear students of the Sacred Heart Network of schools:

My name is Paloma. I am a Sister of the Sacred Heart and your teachers have invited me to present the film you are going to see today.

The film is called "The Letter" and it is about Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato si" and also about us.

1. An encyclical for a global world

(1) "Laudato Si" is an encyclical that deals with the care of the common home. That common home is creation, the cosmos, the home of life for thousands of microorganisms, animal species and also the home of humanity.

(2) On our planet, life, organisms, species, we are interconnected. This is why Pope Francis compares this common home to a seamless fabric, "the marvellous seamless fabric of creation".

(3) And even though we humans are capable of developing science and technology, we are still creatures, living beings that depend on the air they breathe, on micro-organisms, on other species, and on other human beings....

"Everything is related, and the true care of our own life and our relations with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and fidelity to others. (LS 70)

(4) Francis is also going to tell us that this common home is "sister earth" which cries out and complains about the wounds we are inflicting on her in the soil, in the water, in the air and in the living beings.

(5) All these wounds, now more than ever, run the risk of being irreversible. We are facing a programmed global catastrophe, if we do not all get together to find ways to overcome it.

(6) But Francis goes even further. He is not speaking to us about a natural catastrophe, like the eruption of a great volcano, but rather a human catastrophe, a very serious crisis provoked by the most powerful circles of humanity. And also sustained by all the countries and people who look to their own enrichment, whatever the cost.

(7) It is a way of understanding comfort and enrichment that is incapable of moderating itself and that is making its way at the expense of others: deteriorating the planet, accelerating climate change, destroying biodiversity, exacerbating global poverty and wealth, in the world, provoking the social degradation of those who believe they do not need others.

(8) And perhaps one of the most worrisome degradations is what Francis calls "the globalization of indifference". That is to say, that those of us who live well, don't care about whatever happens outside our own comfort zone.

(9) These are harsh words. This film is very uncomfortable. And that is why the Pope and those who act with him have so many enemies. Because they are facing very strong interests.

And that is also why many people prefer not to know, to look the other way, to continue living as usual, without changes or questions. It is the easiest way out. But it has a big problem: problems never disappear because we don't want to see them.

(10) The socio-ecological crisis is one, it is global, and it is very serious.

Pope Francis has not just written a letter.

a. Before writing it, he has been consulting with many competent scientists.

b. After he has written it, he tries to be in permanent contact with those most affected and with those who are struggling to find a solution to the problem.

2. The plot of "The Letter"

The film you are about to see is "The Letter", and it narrates the meeting of Pope Francis with a group of people affected by and fighting against the global crisis.

Arouna Kandé, activist from Senegal. His country is becoming desertified due to climate change.

Africa is responsible for 3% of global emissions, but its people suffer the greatest impact of climate change.

2. Brazilian cacique Dada, threatened with death for opposing the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, home to thousands of species and thousands of species and indigenous populations and also a lung of our planet.

Indigenous people are the guardians of 80% of the world's biodiversity, yet they are largely marginalized and, if they raise their voices, persecuted.

Economic supremacy makes us more and more slaves."

3. Ridhima Pandey, a young activist from India who represents so many young people across the planet who fear for their future and act against climate change. We see Ridhima connected online with an Australian friend who has lost her home and farm in a wildfire.

In these wildfires, 3 billion animals have also lost their lives!!!!

4, Greg Asner and Dora Martin, two American scientists. They have seen how coral reefs in Hawaii are dying. And 99% of the coral reefs will die if the planet's temperature rises by two degrees.

If you notice Arouna, Dada, Ridhima, Greg and Dora are not from the same country, nor do they speak the same language, nor do they have the same religion.

One of them will tell us: "We came as individuals, we didn't know each other, but we all share a dream." That dream is "to fight together for life in the face of a culture of death,"

That's why the film ends with a crucial question: how will you protect everyone's home?

That question is for you, for each of us.

3. What to do?

If you're a bit sensitive, this film won't share that feeling. You may be discouraged by the magnitude of the problems, you may also ask yourself, "What can I do?"

This is not one of those questions that can be answered in two minutes. More than a question, it is a path. A path on which we will, little by little, find answers as we go along.

Every athlete trains, every capacity is cultivated. That is why today I propose three types of steps to follow this path of finding your contribution to the world.

1) Slow down - Learn to watch

Cultivate a gaze of attentive surprise towards all that you have received.

(1) The encyclical of Pope Francis is called "Laudato sì" because this is the hymn dedicated by St. Francis of Assisi to the Creator: "Praise be to you for the sun, and for Sister Earth, and for all living things, and because I am here, because you have created me as I am".

(2) It is a song that exudes gratitude. And that gratitude is the key to regaining the connection to life. That life that has been given to us without any merit and that connects us with everything that exists. Notice, for example, how Dada walks through the jungle or how Ridhima hugs a tree.

(3) You belong to a privileged minority of young people. Everything you have -the affection that surrounds you offers you shelter and opens up possibilities. You live in a rich country with good social services, and you go to a good school. You don't have to work like a mule, you don't have to or walk miles to get home from school, as so many young people your age do.

(4) None of this you have deserved. It has simply been given to you. That should not lead you in any way to feel bad, but to feel responsible. Because you have been given you can give more of yourself. Be amazed and grateful. And learn from Issa, Dada, Ridhima, Greg and Dora, who are putting their possibilities at the service of the common home.

2) Listen

Look at the lives of Arouna, Dada, Ridhima, Greg and Dora. Listen to what they say and how they learned. Listen to their words and gestures and also those of their friends:

- how the author of the mural "Barsa -Barsák" explains his work,
- the reaction of Bilal Seck, who was shipwrecked on a patera, when he learns that a flood has left the children of his village without a school,
- how Arouna explains why people get on boats to get to Europe. Try to put yourself in their shoes, to understand their feelings and reasons. It takes a hard heart to look down on others when you have met them and listened to them.

Try also to listen to that nature that moans so many times without anyone listening to it.

Greg tells us, "Underwater there is no voice." Many species and creatures cannot defend themselves if we don't defend them. But we will never defend them, if we have not we haven't even perceived them. To listen is to learn to see the world beyond our own noses. It is to go beyond one's own interests. And there is only one way to learn: to be silent. learning to perceive and understand the needs of other people and other countries, of other creatures, of nature.

3) Start now!

Dare to take steps. Dada tells us: "while we are alive, we can act". Don't believe for a moment that it doesn't matter what you do because you are young. Precisely because you are young, what you do will shape your future. Francis tells us in the film: "The greatest strength is in the popular movements and young people. That's where the new must come from." Try to act like Ridhima, who networks with other friends. What we can't do alone, we can do together.

As Martin Palmer reminds us, "This is like an orchestra. It sounds good precisely because it is diverse."

Francis speaks of young people being "accommodating." What does he mean? Accommodating is the opposite of clinging to one's privileges. It is to be able to work for a model of growth based on cooperation and not on human exploitation, respectful of nature.

This vision implies strong socio-economic and political changes in the world dynamics. That is why Francis speaks of a "revolution". Because many changes have to happen in a short time. Just as important as these large-scale changes is the change within each one of us.

The heart is the place where true revolutions take place. Or to put it in other words: Nothing changes if you and I don't change.

Don't be afraid, start now! And you will find your contribution.