

MEETING WITH CHILDREN AND IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

*Our Lady, Queen of Angels School, Harlem, New York
Friday, 25 September 2015*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good afternoon!*

I am very happy to be with you today, together with this big family which surrounds you. I see your teachers, your parents and your family members. Thank you for letting me come, and I ask pardon from your teachers for “stealing” a few minutes of their class time. I know that you don’t mind that!

They tell me that one of the nice things about this school, about your work, is that some students come from other places, and many from other countries. That is nice! Even though I know that it is not easy to have to move and find a new home, to meet new neighbors and new friends. It is not easy, but you have to start. At the beginning it can be pretty hard. Often you have to learn a new language, adjust to a new culture, even a new climate. There is so much to learn! And not just homework, but so other many things too.

The good thing is that we also make new friends. This is very important, the new friends we make. We meet people who open doors for us, who are kind to us. They offer us friendship and understanding, and they try to help us not to feel like strangers, foreigners. People work hard to help us feel at home. Even if we sometimes think back on where we came from, we meet good people who help us feel at home. How nice it is to feel that our school, or the places where we gather, are a second home. This is not only important for you, but also for your families. School then ends up being one big family. A family where, together with our mothers and fathers, our grandparents, our teachers and friends, we learn to help one another, to share our good qualities, to give the best of ourselves, to work as a team, for that is very important, and to pursue our dreams.

Very near here is a very important street named after a man who did a lot for other people. I want to talk a little bit about him. He was the Reverend Martin Luther King. One day he said, “I have a dream”. His dream was that many children, many people could have equal opportunities. His dream was that many children like you could get an education. He dreamed that many men and women, like yourselves, could lift their heads high, in dignity and self-sufficiency. It is beautiful to have dreams and to be able to fight for our dreams. Don’t ever forget this.

Today we want to keep dreaming. We celebrate all the opportunities which enable you, and us adults too, not to lose the hope of a better world with greater possibilities. So many of the people I have met are also dreaming with you, they are dreaming of this. That is why they are doing this work. They are involved in your lives to help you move ahead. All of us dream. Always. I know that one of the dreams of your parents and teachers, and all those who help them – and Cardinal Dolan too, who is a good fellow – is that you can grow up and be happy. Here I see you smiling.

Keep smiling and help bring joy to everyone you meet. It isn't always easy. Every home has its problems, difficult situations, sickness, but never stop dreaming so you can be happy.

All of you here, children and adults, have a right to dream and I am very happy that here in school, in your friends and your teachers, in all who are here to help, you can find the support you need. Wherever there are dreams, wherever there is joy, Jesus is always present. Always. But who is it that sows sadness, that sows mistrust, envy, evil desires? What is his name? The devil. The devil always sows sadness, because he doesn't want us to be happy; he doesn't want us to dream. Wherever there is joy, Jesus is always present. Because Jesus is joy, and he wants to help us to feel that joy every day of our lives.

Before going, I would like to give you some homework. Can I? It is just a little request, but a very important one. Please don't forget to pray for me, so that I can share with many people the joy of Jesus. And let us also pray that many other people can share joy like your own, whenever you feel supported, helped and counseled, even when there are problems. Even then, we still feel peace in our hearts, because Jesus never abandons us.

May God bless everyone of you today and may Our Lady watch over all of you. Thank you.

Impromptu remarks:

Don't you know any songs? Don't you know how to sing? Let's see, who is the bravest one here... *(song)* Thank you very much. Now, all together... one song, and then we can all pray the Our Father *(song, followed by the Our Father)*. May almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *(Amen)*. Pray for me! Don't forget the homework!