

Pope Francis: Today we're experiencing an educational catastrophe

- *In the video illustrating his prayer intention for the month of January, the Pope underlines that some 250 million children worldwide are not attending school.*
- *Migration and displacement due to war and poverty are the main causes of this phenomenon.*
- *The Pope invites us to pray “for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected.”*

(Vatican City, 2 January 2025). – In his prayer intention for the month of January, **Pope Francis defends the right to an education for those children and young people** who, due to migration and displacement caused by war and poverty, lack whatever type of education. His video message, produced by the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#) in collaboration with [Jesuit Refugee Service](#) (JRS), illustrates this by speaking of **an authentic “educational catastrophe” that has left some 250 million boys and girls without schooling.**¹

Education for everyone, regardless of immigration status

In fact, the educational process for children and young people who migrate or are displaced due to war is interrupted due to the need to flee their homeland. In

¹ [250 million children out-of-school: What you need to know about UNESCO's latest education data | UNESCO](#)



many cases, schools in conflict zones or refugee camps have limited access to educational material, adequate infrastructure, and trained teachers.²

Furthermore, when children and young people move to other countries or regions, their migration status can prevent them from accessing education, and consequently, from having a better future. This is why **Pope Francis** affirms in the video that “**all children and youth have the right to go to school, regardless of their immigration status.**” On previous occasions, the Pope has asked that they have “regular access to primary and secondary education,” and at the same time that “when they come of age they be guaranteed the right to remain and to enjoy the possibility of continuing their studies.”³

The Church on the front lines

The protagonists in the images accompanying Pope Francis’s words are precisely boys and girls escaping conflict or poverty. **The Pope Video** for this month testifies to the Church’s commitment on the front lines to guarantee their education in the most complex contexts. There are images of educational centers established by the AVSI Foundation for refugee children – the majority from Syria – in Jordan and Lebanon; Salesian schools in Palabek, Uganda, where 60% of the South Sudanese migrants are under 13 years old; the Madre Asunta Institute in Tijuana on the border between Mexico and the United States, constructed by the Scalabrinian family and attended by children from various Latin American countries, the dedication of the JRS, present on various continents, is depicted through their presence in eastern Chad, alongside entire generations born and raised in refugee camps; volunteers of the Pope John XXIII Association who accompany the studies of children who arrive in Greece and Italy on their

² UNESCO. [Migration, displacement & education: building bridges, not walls.](#)

³ Pope Francis, [Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018.](#)



migratory journey; the efforts of international organizations such as UNICEF, which is also present through educational projects in numerous host countries where children escaping the war in Ukraine have been able to attend language classes in the last few years.

Due its long-standing commitment to ensuring that those forced to flee their homes and communities are not deprived of their right to education and their path to a hopeful and just future, the JRS was a strategic partner in producing the English version of this video. “We are grateful to join Pope Francis in inviting people all over the world to pray that education aspirations remain at the heart of the life journey of migrants, refugees and all displaced persons” said Br. Michael Schöpf SJ, JRS International Director. “In all our projects worldwide, we witness how education offers refugees access to security, hope, and economic opportunities. It protects their sense of self, fosters agency, and promotes their integral development.”

The Pope’s concern for migrants and refugees

Pope Francis’s intention for the month of January reflects one of the main themes of his pontificate: his concern for migrants and refugees based on Jesus’s words “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” in the Gospel of Matthew (25:35). Thus, Pope Francis reminds us in his video message, “let’s never forget that **whoever welcomes the foreigner, welcomes Jesus.**”

In the past, the Holy Father has dedicated various prayer intentions to the migrant and refugee crisis, one of the major challenges of our times. The most recent was that of last June of 2024 when he asked that we pray that “migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys fraught with danger and violence, may find welcome and new living opportunities in their host countries.”



Father Cristóbal Fones, S.J., International Director of the **Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network**, recalls that “Pope Francis has on a number of occasions affirmed the need to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees. These are attitudes of everyday life that everyone can and must cultivate. During this month, we want to help discover and develop them in our concrete contexts. The Pope tells us that every stranger who knocks at our door presents the possibility of encountering **Jesus Christ** who **identifies himself in the Gospel with the stranger** who is welcomed or rejected at any point in history.”⁴

“In the Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee which we are celebrating, the Pope also asks that not only the safety and access to work, but also the education of migrants and refugees be guaranteed,”⁵ Father Fones continues. “It is good to remember that in connection with the **Jubilee**, one of the conditions necessary to obtain the **indulgences** granted on the occasion of this Holy Year is precisely **to pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff**, which are very concrete. And during this month, it focuses on respect for this basic right of people who are very vulnerable.”⁶

***The Pope Video** is possible thanks to the generous contributions of many people. You can donate by following [this link](#).*

Where can the video be seen?

- [Official website of The Pope Video](#)
- [YouTube channel of The Pope Video](#)
- [Facebook page of The Pope Video](#)
- [The Pope Video on Twitter/X](#)
- [The Pope Video on Instagram](#)
- [The Pope on Twitter/X Verified @Pontifex](#)
- [The Pope on Instagram Verified @Franciscus](#)

⁴ Pope Francis, [Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018](#).

⁵ [Spes non confundit - Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025](#), n. 13

⁶ [Decree on the Granting of the Indulgence during the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 called by His Holiness Pope Francis](#)



THE POPE VIDEO
Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network



Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network 

About The Pope Video

The Pope Video is an official global initiative with the purpose of disseminating the Holy Father's monthly prayer intentions. It is carried out by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer). **Since 2016, The Pope Video has had more than 238 million views across all the Vatican's social networks, and is translated into more than 23 languages, receiving press coverage in 114 countries.** The videos are produced and created by The Pope Video Prayer Network team, coordinated by Andrea Sarubbi, and distributed with the help of La Machi Communication for Good Causes. The project is sponsored by [Vatican Media](#). More information: [The Pope Video](#).

About the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network is a Pontifical Society, with the mission of mobilizing Catholics through prayer and action in response to the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church. These challenges are presented in the form of prayer intentions entrusted by the Pope to the entire Church. The foundation's mission is inscribed in the dynamic of the Heart of Jesus, a mission of compassion for the world. It was founded in 1844 as the Apostleship of Prayer. It is present in 92 countries, and is made up of more than 22 million Catholics. It includes a youth branch, the Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM). In July 2024, the Pope approved the definitive Statutes of this Pontifical Work (canonical and Vatican legal entity). Its international director is Father Cristóbal Fones, SJ. For more information, visit: <https://www.popesprayer.va>.

About the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)

The [Jesuit Refugee Service](#) is an international Catholic organization with a mission to accompany, serve, and advocate the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, that they may heal, learn and determine their own future. Founded as a global work of the Society of Jesus in 1980, today JRS is present in 58 countries serving about 1.2 million displaced people with education, livelihoods, mental health and psychosocial support, reconciliation, and advocacy services. www.jrs.net / www.jrsusa.org

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