



Inclusion

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“No one is saved alone; it is only possible to be saved together.”

Pope Francis

To speak of inclusion is to speak of humanity. It is to recognise that each person, with their history, talents and frailties, has a unique place in the community. Inclusion is not just an ethical principle or an institutional policy; it is a profound commitment to human dignity, which challenges us to create spaces where everyone can participate, learn and grow. Pope Francis was inspiring: “God, in his plan of love, does not want to exclude anyone, but wants to include everyone.”

At the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, and particularly in the Unit for Integral Development of the Person (UDIP), we believe that the integral development of the person is only possible when diversity is welcomed and valued. Inclusion means opening doors, but also building bridges: between cultures, knowledge, experiences and ways of being. It is a movement that begins with the gaze – a gaze that sees in the other not a difference that separates, but a richness that adds.

In a time marked by subtle inequalities and exclusions, inclusion requires courage and creativity. It is not enough to guarantee access; it is necessary to promote belonging. This implies educational environments that respect rhythms, listen to voices, and recognise vulnerabilities and potentialities. As Pope Francis recalls in the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*: “No one is saved alone; it is only possible to be saved together.”

UDIP seeks to take on this challenge in its activities: to care for the person in various dimensions – emotional, spiritual and social. Because inclusion is more than integration; it is accompanying, it is giving meaning,

it is creating conditions for each student to discover who they are and who they can be. It is, ultimately, educating for freedom and responsibility.

When we talk about inclusion, we also talk about community. *T4EU Week* reminds us that there is no community without communities: each group, identity and voice contribute to a stronger and fairer social fabric. Pope Francis repeated at WYD Lisbon 2023: “There is room for everyone, everyone, everyone in the Church.” This sentence has become a symbol of a culture that welcomes without barriers and challenges us to leave our comfort zone and go to the peripheries.

The future we desire is not built with walls, but with bridges. Bridges that connect knowledge, cultures and generations; that allow each person to find their place and contribute to the common good. Pope Francis’s vision in *Fratelli Tutti* shows that there is no true human development without the contribution of the most vulnerable. And diversity is a source of wealth, never a reason for exclusion.

Is not inclusion a form of love? To love is to recognise in others an inalienable value, a dignity that does not depend on conditions, but is constitutive of their humanity. It is this love that gives meaning to education and makes a truly human society possible.

References

Pope Francis, *Jubilee Audience*, 12 November 2016.

Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti*, 3 October 2020.

Pope Francis, *Address at World Youth Day in Lisbon*, 3 August 2023.

Pope Francis, *Address to the G7 on Inclusion*, 17 October 2024.