



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS OF THE
"LIBERA UNIVERSITÀ MARIA SANTISSIMA ASSUNTA" (LUMSA)**

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Thursday, 12 November 2009*

*Your Eminences,
Mr President of the Senate and Distinguished Authorities,
Rector Magnificent and Dear Professors
Dear School Missionaries
Dear Students and All Friends,*

I am glad to be meeting you on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the "Libera Università Maria Santissima Assunta". I cordially greet Prof. Giuseppe Dalla Torre, Rector of your University, and thank him for his courteous words. I am pleased to greet Hon. Mr Renato Schifani, President of the Italian Senate, and the other Italian Civil and Military authorities, as well as the numerous well known figures, rectors and administrative directors who are present. I address my warm welcome to all of you who make up the great family of LUMSA.

Your Athenaeum was founded in 1939 on the initiative of the Servant of God Mother Luigia Tincani, Foundress of the School Missionaries of the Union of St Catherine of Siena, and of Cardinal Giuseppe Pizzardo, then Prefect of the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities for the purpose of preparing women religious destined to teach in Catholic schools with an adequate university training. It began its activity in the atmosphere of educational commitment in the Catholic world inspired by Pius xi's Encyclical *Divini illius Magistri*. Your University thus came into being with a very precise Catholic identity and also encouraged by the Holy See, with which it has retained close ties. In the past 70 years LUMSA has trained thousands of teachers and has developed considerably, especially following its transformation in 1989 into a Free University and the consequent creation of new Faculties with an extension of the catchment area. I know that

today it has about 9,000 students in its four establishments in Italy and is an important reference point in the educational sector. While the cultural and legislative situation in Italy and in Europe was evolving with profound changes, LUMSA was able to make headway with a dual objective: to remain faithful to the original insight of Mother Tincani and, at the same time, to respond to the new challenges of society.

In fact, the contemporary context is marked by a disturbing educational emergency on which I have been able to reflect on various occasions and in which the task of those called to the teaching profession acquires a quite special importance. It is primarily a question of the role of university teachers but also of the actual educational curriculum of students training to be teachers in the different kinds and grades of school or as professionals in the various social milieus. In fact, every profession becomes an opportunity for the witness and practical expression of values personally internalized during the academic period. The profound economic crisis which has spread across the whole world, together with its root causes has brought to the fore the need for a more decisive and courageous investment in the field of knowledge and education as a way to respond to the numerous open-ended challenges and to prepare the young generations to build a better future (cf. Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, nn. [30-31](#), [61](#)). Thus the need is being felt to make connections in thought, to teach interdisciplinary collaboration and reciprocal learning. Moreover, in the face of the profound changes that are taking place it is ever more urgently necessary to refer to the fundamental values that must be passed on as an indispensable patrimony to the young generations and, consequently, to question oneself on what these values are. Academic institutions are therefore being confronted by pressing ethical questions.

In this context, faithful to their specific identity and in the effort to render a qualified service in the Church and in society, Catholic Universities are entrusted with an important role. In this regard the instructions given by my venerable Predecessor [John Paul II](#) in the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* are more timely than ever. He invited the Catholic University to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world. In the complex social and cultural reality, the Catholic University is expected to act with a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as a whole; with a continuing sapiential reflection, illumined by faith, and scientific research; in fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church; with an institutional commitment to the service of the People of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent destination (cf. n. 13).

Dear friends, LUMSA is a Catholic University; this Christian inspiration is a specific element of its identity. As may be read in its *Magna charta*, it proposes scientific work oriented to the search for truth in a dialogue between faith and reason, striving for the ideal spiritual integration of knowledge and values. At the same time, a formative activity is established, to be carried out with constant attention to ethics, elaborating positive syntheses between faith and culture and between science and knowledge, for the full and harmonious development of the human person. This structure, dear teachers, is both stimulating and demanding for you. Indeed, while you strive to be ever

better qualified in teaching and in research, you also propose to cultivate the educational mission. Today, as in the past, the University stands in need of true teachers who transmit, together with scientific content and knowledge, a strict method of research and profound values and motivation. Immersed in a fragmented and relativistic society, dear students, always keep your minds and hearts open to the truth. Devote yourselves to acquiring a profound knowledge that contributes to the integral formation of your personality, to refining your ability to seek the true and the good throughout your life, to train professionally in order to become builders of a society in which there is greater justice and solidarity. May Mother Tincani's example nurture in you all the commitment to accompany your rigorous academic work with an intense inner life sustained by prayer. May the Virgin Mary, Sedes Sapientiae, guide this process with true wisdom which comes from God. Thank you for this pleasant meeting and I warmly bless each one of you and your work.

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