



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE PONTIFICAL COMMITTEE FOR HISTORICAL SCIENCES**

*Vatican's Hall of the Popes
Saturday, 12 April 2014*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am meeting you at the conclusion of your Plenary Assembly, during which, as recalled by the President, you are commemorating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences by Venerable Pius XII. I am grateful for the sentiments which Fr Ardura expressed on your behalf, and I am especially grateful for the commitment with which you place your expertise and your professionalism at the service of the Church and the Holy See.

Cicero's famous statement from *De Oratore* which Blessed John XXIII — who was so fond of the study of history — borrowed in his inaugural address at the Second Vatican Council, still holds true: "*Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae*". The study of history indeed represents one of the paths for the passionate search for truth that has always imbued the mind of man.

In your studies and in your teaching, you deal especially with the vicissitudes of the Church that journeys through time, with her glorious history of evangelization, of hope and daily struggle, of lives spent in service and fidelity to work, tiring as it may be (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 96), as well as infidelity, denial, sin. Your research, which is marked both by authentic passion for the Church and by sincere love for the truth, can be a great help to those whose task it is to discern what the Holy Spirit wishes to say to the Church today.

The Committee for Historical Sciences has long since entered into dialogue and cooperation with cultural institutions and academic centres from many nations, and has respectfully been welcomed

into the global structure of historical studies. In meeting and working together with researchers from every culture and religion, you can offer a specific contribution to dialogue between the Church and the modern world.

Among the initiatives you have planned, I think particularly of the international conference to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. In it you will review research's most recent findings, paying special attention to the Holy See's diplomatic initiatives during the tragic conflict and the contribution Catholics and other Christians made by coming to the aid of the wounded, refugees, orphans and widows, by searching for the missing, as well as by rebuilding a world torn apart by what Benedict XV termed "needless carnage" (*Letter to Leaders of the Peoples at War*, 1 August 1917). And the heartfelt appeal of Pius XII still resonates today as timely as ever: "Nothing is lost by peace. Everything may be lost by war" (*Radio message: Un'ora grave to the Heads of State and peoples of the world*, 24 August 1939). *When we listen again to these prophetic words, truly we realize that history is the "magistra vitae".*

Dear friends, I wish you an ever more fruitful journey of study, and I encourage you to continue your research in the service of truth with enthusiasm. I bless you from the heart and I ask you to remember me in prayer. Thank you!