



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER  
TO THE PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS  
OF THE ST MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY (LUMSA)**

*Friday, 29 October 1999*

*Your Eminences,*

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,*

*Dear Teachers,*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I am pleased to meet you on the happy occasion of the 60th anniversary of *St Mary of the Assumption* University. Thank you for your festive welcome! Thank you for this renewed testimony of your affection and your fidelity to the Successor of Peter!

With cordial esteem I greet the Rector Magnificent, Prof. Giuseppe Dalla Torre, and thank him for his courteous words on behalf of the speakers. I extend an affectionate greeting to the Cardinals and Bishops present, whose participation in this event attests to the important role carried out by the Vicariate of Rome and the Congregations for Catholic Education and for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in the foundation and life of this university.

I also extend my respectful greetings to the academic and governmental authorities, to the distinguished teachers, the members of the Administrative Council, the Luigia Tincani Association, the technical staff and the families and friends of this prestigious institution. Lastly, I turn my cordial thoughts to each of you, dear students, who are the heart of academic life; with you, I greet the Graduates' Group, who have completed their professional and spiritual formation here.

2. The celebration of this 60th anniversary is an invitation to remember the past in order to rediscover the origins of your university and the ideals that inspired its beginnings.

Your university originated in the heart and mind of the Servant of God Luigia Tincani who, with genius and prophetic insight, wanted to open the faculties of teaching and research to both consecrated and lay women. In her experience as

a university student and teacher she had realized that "there is no greater suffering than the unsatisfied desire for knowledge, no poverty more distressing than the poverty of the spirit; there is no greater joy than the possession of truth, the pre-eminent way to reach the fullness of love" (cf. Luigia Tincani, *Una vita a servizio della verità e dell'amore*).

Sustained in this knowledge, she presented her project to the Church authorities, who approved it and, in the persons of my venerable Predecessors, Pius XII and Paul VI, blessed it and promoted its gradual realization with every care.

3. In the past 60 years LUMSA's progress has been marked by an intelligent and courageous style of "cultural charity" which has always sought to respond with adequate ways and means to the most demanding expectations of young people.

Today, with its specific identity as a Catholic university, your athenaeum is a prestigious and distinguished presence in the Italian academic world, as well as in Europe and the world. Its motto, "*In fide et humanitate*", already expresses the great pedagogical insights that are its origin and continue to motivate its academic commitment. In fact, the university cannot focus only on the acquisition of knowledge. It has an essentially educational vocation which, through a disinterested search for the truth, aims at the harmonious growth of the personality and does so with respect for the order that presides over the intrinsic structure of knowledge.

To accomplish this "educational task", the university must be a real community in which teachers and students can establish useful and professional interpersonal relationships. I know of the university's effort to promote these educational goals and, as I express my deep satisfaction with its praiseworthy results, I invite you to continue on the path you have taken, making it a special feature of your athenaeum.

4. In the Encyclical *Fides et ratio* (cf. n. 81), I recalled that the phenomenon of the fragmentation of knowledge leads to a "crisis of meaning" that causes many to wonder "whether it still makes sense to ask about meaning". This is one of the most problematic aspects of contemporary culture.

Church needs young people committed to truth and charity

The answer to this serious crisis, a source of sterile and devastating scepticism, is to promote a philosophical culture which will "recover its sapiential dimension as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life", in harmony with the word of God.

I hope that your university, in fidelity to its original inspiration, will be able to take up this challenge in the areas of research, teaching, learning and style of community life, to form men and women in harmony with the truth of their own mission!

This task is entrusted especially to you, distinguished teachers! On this solemn occasion I am pleased to reread with you the wise words of the Servant of God Luigia Tincani: "Be enthusiastic about your educational ministry. The intellectual mission has something in common with the priesthood, if all study and teaching is a search for, an acquisition and transmission of truth, and *si omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est*. May the art of living be impressed upon you: make yourselves loved first of all!" (cf. Luigia Tincani, *Una vita al servizio della verità e dell'amore*).

5. I now address you, dear students of *St Mary of the Assumption* University: the Church needs your youthfulness committed to truth, charity and peace. On the threshold of the new millennium, she asks you to be fearless workers in the task of building "a humanity which is beautiful, pure and holy, pleasing to God, whom mankind longs for and needs, especially today" (John Paul II, *Address to the Missionaries of the Schools*, 5 January 1989). May your active participation in World Youth Day, which will be held in Rome from 15 to 20 August next, and in the important events of the Holy Year be an excellent opportunity for each of you to share this desire with young people from all over the world and to bear witness to the new humanity which the Lord wants to create also through your generous commitment.

May the Woman who, in giving birth to the Truth and treasuring it in her heart, has shared it forever with all humanity (cf. *Fides et ratio*, n. 108) accompany and protect you on your search for wisdom, the ultimate and authentic goal of all true knowledge.

With these wishes, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to everyone here and to the entire academic community of LUMSA.

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