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HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 170401b

Saturday 01.04.2017

Letter of the Holy Father to His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, on the first centenary of its founding

The following is the Holy Father's letter to His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, Grand Chancellor of the Catholic University of Peru, sent on the occasion of the first centenary of the institution.

Letter of the Holy Father

Dear brother,

I am pleased to greet you and through you, to those who compose the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, on the occasion of the first centenary of this institution. I join you in giving thanks to the Lord for all the benefits received from His infinite goodness during these years dedicated to the service of the Church and the society of this beloved country.

This pleasing anniversary gives us the opportunity to reflect on the nature and purpose of the University. In its Statutes it is defined as a "community of teachers, students and graduates dedicated to the essential purposes of a Catholic university institution" (Article 1). This formulates the summary of a whole project, not only educational but also of life.

It is primarily a community, which means recognizing members of the same family who share a common history based on the same principles that gave rise to and motivated them. The community is formed and consolidated when it walks together, united, valuing the legacy it has received and that it must safeguard, making it live in the contemporary world and transmitting it to the new generations. It is undeniable that the founders of this educational centre launched a courageous initiative in the service of Peruvian society and the Church. It is a call to openness to other cultures and realities; if one is locked in oneself, contemplating only one's own knowledge and achievements, one is doomed to failure. However, knowledge of other thoughts and customs enriches us, and stimulates us to reflect within ourselves more deeply in order to engage in a serious and fruitful dialogue with our surrounding environment.

The community is made up of teachers, students and graduates. Their roles are different but they all need each other to exercise them authentically. The Master is one, our Lord (Mt 23:8; Jn 13:13); And he who is called to teach must do so in imitation of Jesus, the good teacher, Who went out to sow every day with His Word, and was patient with those who followed Him and humble in his dealings with them. If we look at his example, we realize that in order to teach one has first to learn and to be a disciple. The latter is the one who follows the example of his teacher and is attentive to his teachings in order to be able to excel and be better. This inner tension helps us to recognize ourselves as humble and in need of divine grace in order to bring the received talents to fruition. Teaching and learning are slow and meticulous processes, which necessitate attention and constant love, because they involve collaborating with the Creator to give shape to the work of His hands. Performing this “sacred” task fosters the knowledge and fruitfulness of the perfection and goodness in every creature that loved by God and is a reflection of God's infinite wisdom and goodness (cf. *Laudato Si’*, 69). In this task, everyone – teachers, students and graduates – is necessary. Each one contributes the competence of his knowledge and his specific vocation and life, so that this centre of studies shines not only in its academic excellence, but also as a school of humanity.

Finally, this community has the challenge of seeking and striving towards the essential purpose of a Catholic university institution; that is, to be evangelized so as to evangelize. Every Christian has been conquered by the Lord and that encounter is transformed into witness. The acquisition of knowledge is not enough, it is necessary to bring it to life, like leaven in the mass. We are missionary disciples and are called to become a living gospel for the world. Through the example of our life and our good works we will bear witness to Christ, so that the heart of man can change and become a new creature. This institution, with all its members, must face the challenge of meeting the man and woman of today, bearing an authentic and sure word. To achieve this end, the truth must be ardently and rigorously pursued, as well as its adequate transmission, thus contributing to the promotion of the human person and to the construction of society (cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 2). This University, which in accordance with its origin, history and mission, has a special link with the Successor of Peter and, in communion with him, with the Universal Church, will have achieved its objectives if it can bring to the social fabric those doses of professionalism and humanity proper to the Christian able to seek with passion that synthesis of faith and reason.

I commend to Our Mother the Virgin Mary, Throne of Wisdom, the projects and challenges of this Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and I pray to the Lord for all those who make up this educational community, as well as their families and their loved ones. I ask you not to forget to pray for me, and impart an Apostolic Blessing.