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Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to Cardinal Angelo Scola on the occasion of the 93rd Day for the Catholic University

The following is the letter sent by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin on behalf of the Holy Father Francis to the president of the G. Toniolo Institute for Higher Studies, Cardinal Angelo Scola, archbishop of Milan, on the occasion of the 93rd Day for the Catholic University, held today on the theme: "Studying the world is already changing it".

Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State

Mr. Cardinal,

More than a few circumstances urge us to look with renewed and special attention to the young. The economic and social crisis of our time, which also brings with it a certain amount of human and spiritual loss, is reflected on them, with worrying and sometimes dramatic implications. Uncertainty about the future, precariousness and often the lack of work, the consequent mobility, difficulties encountered in social inclusion and in realizing projects for family life make the new generations more fragile and disoriented. But, despite these critical elements, young people continue to be bearers of hope and have tremendous potential for building a better future.

Following the example of Jesus, Who continues to look upon them with trust and tenderness (cf. Mt 19: 16-22), the Church continually addresses them with innumerable pastoral and formative initiatives. Today this attention is made even stronger and more committed as a result of the Holy Father's decision to focus in the next Synod on the theme "Young people, faith and vocational discernment". With this initiative, we wish to emphasize the closeness and affection of the whole ecclesial community to the new generations and at the same time identify with them and for them the ways to make them protagonists of ecclesial and social life.

In communicating this important ecclesial event to young people (cf. *Letter to the Young*, 13 January 2017), the Holy Father invites them to deepen that faith which, from Abraham to our day, drives us towards a new land.

“What is this new land for us today”, the Pope asks young people “if not a more just and fraternal society that you deeply desire, and wish to build up to the peripheries of the world?”

In spite of everything, young people have a strong desire not to remain spectators and the Holy Father exhorts them not to stifle the call of their conscience. “That cry”, the Pope stresses - is born from your young heart that cannot not stand injustice and cannot bend to the culture of waste or give way to the globalization of indifference”.

Only careful discernment can help the young to face such great and demanding challenges. But such discernment, that touches all areas of life, needs to be accompanied and sustained both by ordinary pastoral work in the communities and ecclesial groups, and by institutions able to guarantee a high and qualified scientific, cultural and spiritual formation.

In this area, a role of primary importance is held by the Catholic Universities, entrusted with the mission of preparing young people able to form, with the resources of the intellect, with generosity of heart and with the strength of the Spirit, their life and the future path of humanity. The contribution offered today by the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and the Toniolo Institute for Higher Studies, as its founding body and guarantor, is even more relevant and decisive. By continuing to develop, with fidelity and creativity, the fruitful initiative of Fr. Agostino Gemelli and his collaborators, the University for Italian Catholics increasingly offers a reference point for many young people who wish to make their contribution to a more just, open and united society.

Therefore, the entire Italian ecclesial community should be encouraged to support this important academic institution, also through the celebration of the National Day for the Catholic University, which this year comes to its 93rd edition. The theme “Studying the world is already changing it”, chosen for the celebration on Sunday 30 April, offers everyone the opportunity to reflect on the importance of study and the integral formation of the person in influencing the changes in progress and contributing to improve the world we live in.

This is the profound meaning of university studies and of a particularly significant period for personal and community discernment. “In all contexts, particularly in that of the university, it is important to recognize and face this change of epoch with reflection and discernment, without ideological prejudice, fear or running away”, said the Pope recently, speaking at Roman university. This discernment is favoured by the fact that “the University is, par excellence, the place where consciences are formed amid intense debate on the demands of good, truth and beauty, and those of reality, with all its contradictions” (Discourse at the University of Rome Tre, 17 February 2017).

Such confrontation, arduous and exhilarating, finds in the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart a special environment able to offer young people an education, solid from a scientific point of view and rich in values from a human and spiritual perspective. In order to continue to support deserving but less advantaged students, the contribution the Holy Father has decided to make to this excellent Institute of Higher Studies will not be lacking on this occasion. His Holiness assures his closeness and paternal support, and as he asks to be remembered in prayer, he heartily imparts a special blessing to Your Eminence, to the Magnificent Rector, to the General Ecclesiastical Assistant, the members of the Toniolo Institute, the illustrious Professors, the technical-administrative staff and all students.

I add my personal vows and would like to take the opportunity to confirm my highest regards to Your Eminence.
