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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 181112c

Monday 12.11.2018

Letter from the Holy Father to the Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Lateran University on the occasion of the inauguration of the Academic Year and the institution of the new course of study in “Sciences of Peace”

The following is the Letter sent by the Holy Father to the Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Lateran University, Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, on the occasion of the inauguration of the academic year and the institution of the new course of studies in “Sciences of Peace”:

Letter of the Holy Father

To the Venerable Brother
Mr. Cardinal Angelo De Donatis
Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Lateran University

1. The desire for peace that arises from the human family has always led the Church to strive to make every effort to help liberate men and women from the tragedies of war and to alleviate its dangerous consequences. Even in the present time, in which the need to prevent and resolve conflicts increases, the Church, in the light of the Gospel, feels called upon to inspire and support every initiative that assures to the different nations and countries a path of peace, fruit of authentic dialogue capable of extinguishing hatred, of abandoning selfishness and self-centredness, of overcoming the desires for power and to overwhelm the weakest and the last.

Above all, this intention presupposes an educational effort to listen and understand, but also to the knowledge and study of the patrimony of values, notions and tools capable of breaking down tendencies towards isolation, closure and the logic of power, which are bearers of violence and destruction. Means of conciliation, forms of transitional justice, guarantees of sustainable development, protection and the care of creation are today some of the tools able to pave the way for the peaceful solution of conflicts, to counter careerism and dominant positions and thus to form people who are dedicated without reserve to the service of the cause of man.

To be a credible mediator in the face of world public opinion, the Church is called to favour the “solutions to

problems affecting peace, social harmony, the land, the defence of life, human and civil rights” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* 65). A task carried out also through the action that the Holy See conducts in the international community and in its institutions, working with the instruments of diplomacy to overcome conflicts with peaceful means and mediation, promotion and respect for fundamental human rights, and the integral development of peoples and countries.

2. In the pursuit of this objective, a central role is occupied by the university world, a place symbolic of that integral humanism that continually needs to be renewed and enriched, so that it can produce the courageous cultural renewal the present moment demands. This also challenges the Church which, with her worldwide network of ecclesiastical universities, can “to offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas”. As I recently recalled in reforming the order of academic studies in ecclesiastical institutions (cf. Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium*, 2). This certainly does not mean altering the institutional sense and the consolidated traditions of our academic realities, but rather orienting their function in the perspective of a more markedly “outbound” and missionary Church. Indeed, it is possible to face the challenges of the contemporary world with a capacity to respond adequately in content and compatible in language, first of all addressing the new generations. Therefore, this is the task entrusted to us: to incarnate the Word of God for the Church and for the humanity of the third millennium. And in doing so, it is important that students and teachers feel they are pilgrims called to announce the Good News to all peoples, without being afraid of risking and dreaming of peace for all people and all nations.

3. Therefore, inspired by the desire to transpose this patrimony of values and actions into the academic field, I institute at this Pontifical University, which specifically participates in the mission of the Bishop of Rome, a cycle of studies in Peace, as an academic path to which the theological, philosophical, juridical, economic and social spheres contribute according to the criterion of inter- and transdisciplinarity (cf. *ibid.*, 4, c). The curricular structure will therefore avail itself of the range of courses taught by the Faculties and Institutes of the Lateran University to confer the academic degrees of Baccalaureate and Licentiate at the conclusion, respectively, of a first three-year cycle and a two-year specialization course.

4. Through you, Mr. Cardinal, I entrust the new course of study at the university, assigning the direction to the Magnificent Rector, so that a specific scientific formation may be guaranteed to priests, consecrated persons and laypeople. The diocesan bishops, the military ordinaries, the Episcopal Conferences, the Superiors of the different forms of consecrated life, the heads of associations and lay movements, and all those who so wish, may look with trust to the course in Sciences of Peace to promote adequate preparation for current and future workers for peace.

Faced with this task, I hope that, in daily service to the See of Peter, the entire Lateran University community – lecturers, students and all staff – may feel involved in sowing the seeds of the culture of peace. A work that begins with listening, professionalism and dedication, always accompanied by humility, meekness and the wish to be all things to all people.

I place under the protection of my two predecessors, Saints John XXIII and Paul VI, true heralds of peace in the world and who have contributed greatly to the development of the magisterium in this field, this new fruit of the solicitude of the Church, entrusting it to Mary Queen of Peace, that he may help us understand and live that fraternity that the heart of her Son demands, and from which true peace derives.

From the Vatican, 12 November 2018

Memorial of Blessed John of Peace

Francis
