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Audience with the teachers and students of the Vatican School of Palaeography, Diplomatics and Archivistis and the Vatican School of Library Science

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the teachers and students of the Vatican School of Palaeography, Diplomatics and Archivistis and the Vatican School of Library Science, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Your Excellency,
Honorable Ministers,
Most Reverend Prefects,
Dear professors and dear students!

Thank you for coming today to celebrate two significant anniversaries of the Schools of the Apostolic Archive and of the Apostolic Library: the 140th of the Vatican School of Palaeography, Diplomatics and Archivistis, and the 90th of the Vatican School of Library Science. They are two higher education institutions that are reaching important milestones which I am pleased about, because I know and appreciate the commitment that all of you put into a service that has prepared and prepares many archivists and librarians in the Church and in the world. Yours is an important task: to encourage and support, with all willingness, people who, as the evangelist Luke says in the prologue of his Gospel, decide to “[follow] all things closely ... that you may know the truth”. Yours is truly a service to the “truth concerning the things of which you have been informed” Christian and human sense (cf. *Lk* 1:3-4). A solidity so necessary in times in which news is sometimes spread without verification and without research.

And it is good for me to see this formative work of yours, which requires continual updating, and to witness the esteem surrounding these two Schools. Therefore, I am grateful for your efforts towards the full institutional recognition that these Schools can enjoy.

However, we must be aware that one must never be complacent about the results achieved: we are faced with decisive cultural and epochal challenges. Allow me to point out some of them that – I am convinced – are also very much on the minds of those who guide you at the educational level. I am thinking, for example, of the major issues related to globalization, of the risk of the dulling and devaluation of knowledge; I am thinking of the increasingly complex relationship with technology; I am thinking of reflections on cultural traditions that must be cultivated and proposed without reciprocal impositions; I am thinking of the need to include and never exclude anyone from the sources of knowledge and, at the same time, to defend everyone from what is toxic, unhealthy and violent that can lurk in the world of social media and technological knowledge.

In this context, the first capacity that is required is that of great openness to exchange and dialogue, and a readiness to welcome, especially the marginalized and the materially, culturally and spiritually poor. May your studies truly measure up to the fragility and richness of people today! And this applies not only to you students, but also to the teachers who guide you.

Our two Schools have undergone profound reforms in recent years, but they must continue to confront the needs of places of knowledge preservation and with other similar professional education institutes, to learn and share ideas and experiences, to grow in openness and avoid self-absorption. How ugly that is! As we say in Argentina: “yo, me, mi, con migo, para mi”, “I, me, with me, for me”. This is bad! All this must constitute the starting point for a genuine relaunch. Indeed, I believe that this is the purpose of anniversaries such as the one we are celebrating today: not merely to honour old glories, or to remember with gratitude those who wanted and supported these institutions in the past, but to look ahead, to the future, to have the courage to reimagine ourselves in the face of the demands coming from the cultural and professional world.

These Schools have possessed, from their origins, a decisive characteristic: that of having an eminently practical nature and a concrete approach to problems and studies, following a line I have indicated several times, because comparison with the reality of things is of greater value than ideology. Ideologies always kill. From you, one teaches and learns how to be archivists and librarians who are in touch, beyond studies, with the living experience of those who practice this profession in the Library and in the Archive; you are granted the privilege of educating yourselves directly from the centuries-old heritage that the Archive and the Library have the task and the responsibility of conserving and transmitting to present and future generations. And these contacts, besides being an opportunity for technical learning, are also a stimulus to mental and human openness. May this tangibility and this openness be the lodestars of your future journey and of a decisive relaunch of the two Vatican Schools.

With these hopes, I heartily bless all of you and your work. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
