



# The Holy See

---

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS  
TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY,  
TOGETHER WITH MEMBERS OF THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL INSTITUTE  
AND THE PONTIFICAL ORIENTAL INSTITUTE**

*Paul VI Audience Hall  
Thursday, 10 April 2014*

*Dear Cardinals,  
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I welcome all of you, professors, students and staff of the Pontifical Gregorian University, the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Oriental Institute. I greet Fr Nicolás, the Father Delegate, and all the other Superiors, as well as the Cardinals and Bishops present. Thank you!

The Institutions to which you belong — formed into a *Consortium* by [Pope Pius XI](#) in 1928 — are entrusted to the Society of Jesus, and share the same desire “to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the Cross ... and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, His spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth” (*Formula*, 1). It is important that collaboration and synergy develop among you, strong in the historic memory and at the same time informed of the present and looking to the future — the Father General used to say: look far ahead”, to the horizon” — looking to the future with creativity and imagination, seeking to form a global vision of the situations and present challenges and a shared manner of confronting them, finding new paths without fear.

The first aspect that I would like to focus on, thinking of your commitment both as teachers and as students, as well as staff of the Institution, is that of *appreciating the very place* in which you work and study, that is, *the City and above all the Church of Rome*. Here there is a past and there is a present. There are the roots of faith: the memory of the Apostles and of the Martyrs; and here

there is the ecclesial “today”, there is the present journey of this Church which presides in charity, at the service of unity and universality. All of this should not be taken for granted! It must be experienced and appreciated, with a commitment that is partly institutional and partly personal, left to the initiative of each one.

But at the same time you bring the variety of your home Churches, of your own cultures. This is one of the inestimable richness of Rome’s institutions. It offers a precious opportunity for growing in the faith and of opening the mind and heart to the horizon of catholicity. Within this horizon the dialectic between the “centre” and the “peripheries” assumes its proper form, namely the form of the Gospel, according to the logic of God who reaches the centre from the peripheries in order to return to the peripheries.

The other aspect that I wish to share is that of the *relationship between study and spiritual life*. Your intellectual commitment, in teaching and in research, in study and in the most comprehensive formation, will be all the more fruitful and effective the more fully it is animated by love for Christ and for the Church, the more the relationship between study and prayer is strengthened and made more harmonious. This is not out-dated, this is the centre!

This is one of the challenges of our time: transmitting knowledge and offering a key for vital comprehension, not a heap of notions unconnected to one another. There is need of a true evangelical hermeneutic for better understanding life, the world and humanity, not of a synthesis but of a spiritual atmosphere of research and certainty based on the truths of reason and of faith. Philosophy and theology permit one to acquire the convictions that structure and strengthen the intelligence and illuminate the will ... but this is fruitful only if it is done with an open mind and on one’s knees. The theologian who is satisfied with his complete and conclusive thought is mediocre. The good theologian and philosopher has an open, that is, an incomplete, thought, always open to the *maius* of God and of the truth, always in development, according to the law that St. Vincent of Lerins describes as: “*annis consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate*” (*Commonitorium primum*, 23: PL 50, 668): it is strengthened over the years, it expands over time, it deepens with age. This is the theologian who has an open mind. And the theologian who does not pray and who does not worship God ends up sunk in the most disgusting narcissism. And this is an ecclesiastical illness. The narcissism of theologians, of thinkers, is disgusting.

The purpose of study at every Pontifical University is ecclesial. Research and study ought to be integrated with personal and community life, with missionary commitment, with fraternal charity and sharing with the poor, with care of the interior life in relationship with the Lord. Your Institutes are not machines for producing theologians and philosophers; they are communities in which one grows, and that growing occurs in the family. In the university family there is the charism of governance, entrusted to the superiors, and there is the diaconate of the non-teaching staff, which is indispensable for creating a family atmosphere in everyday life, and also for creating the attitude of humanity and of practical wisdom, that will make the students of today people capable of

building humanity, of transmitting the truth in a human dimension, of understanding that if one lacks the goodness and the beauty of belonging to a workaday family one ends up being an intellectual without talent, an ethicist without goodness, a thinker lacking in the splendour of beauty and only “made up” in formalism. The daily, respectful contact with hard work and the witness of the men and women who work in your Institutions will give you that dose of realism that is so necessary to ensure that your knowledge will be human and not that of the laboratory.

Dear brethren, I entrust each of you, your studies and your work, to the intercession of Mary, *Sedes Sapientiae*, of St Ignatius of Loyola and of your other Patron Saints. I bless you from the heart, and I pray for you. And you, please, pray for me too! Thank you!

And now, before I give you my blessing, I invite you to pray to Our Lady, the Mother, that she may help us and protect us. *Hail Mary...*