

## **Pope to Catholic universities: "Continue to nurture Wisdom and Humanity".**

**By Francesca Merlo**

Pope Francis urges Catholic universities to prioritize genuine passion for truth, resist fear and societal walls, and commit to transformative education and addressing contemporary issues.

Celebrating one hundred years of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), Pope Francis welcomed its delegation in the Vatican, noting that "one hundred years of growth and development, is cause for great gratitude!" The Holy Father recalled that the first association of the eighteen Catholic universities was blessed by Pope Pius XI in 1924. Twenty-five years later, in 1949, Venerable Pius XII established the Federation of Catholic Universities.

### **Networking for peace!**

Then, the Pope introduced the first of two aspects that he wished to highlight in this centenary. The first is "the encouragement to cooperate through 'networking.'" "Today there are almost two thousand Catholic universities in our world," noted the Pope, adding that "at a time of great fragmentation, we must dare to counter the trend, and to globalize hope, unity and concord in place of indifference, polarization and conflict."

The second aspect, the Pope continued, is derived from the fact that "the Federation was established 'in the wake of a horrendous war,' to be a means of fostering 'reconciliation and the growth of peace and charity among peoples.'" Sadly, the Pope, continued, "We are celebrating this centenary against the backdrop of a war, a third world war fought piecemeal."

For this reason, he went on to suggest, that it is all the more essential that Catholic universities "be in the forefront of efforts to build the culture of peace in all its facets, which need to be addressed in an interdisciplinary vision."

### **The "business" of education**

Pope Francis then went on to emphasise that education is not merely a transactional enterprise, dependent on perfect programs or efficient equipment, but rather it should be animated by a greater passion. With this in mind, he asked that a greater passion animate the university, "as evidenced in a shared search for truth, a greater horizon of meaning, lived out in a community of knowledge where the liberality of love is palpable."

The Holy Father then went on to challenge Catholic universities not to replicate societal walls of inequality, dehumanisation, intolerance, and indifference. Rather, he invited the delegation to build fraternity, in all spheres of their work.

### **Continue to help the Church in her mission!**

Bringing his address to a close, Pope Francis expressed his gratitude for the commitment of Catholic universities. "I would also ask for your help," said the Pope. "I ask you to help the Church, at this moment in her history, to shed light on the deepest human aspirations by

offering insight and understanding, as well as the 'reasons of hope' born of faith, and thus assisting the Church to engage confidently in dialogue on the great issues of our time."

Finally, the Holy Father invited all those present to keep their gaze fixed on Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, asking, "What is the secret of Our Lady of Wisdom?" before replying, "It is that she brings us Jesus, the Wisdom of God, who offers us the criteria to direct every pursuit of knowledge."