

Dear Fr. General,

Dear Members of the Thirty-sixth General Congregation,

Dear Friends in the Lord,

It is a great pleasure for me, as the Rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University, and for us all here to welcome you all this evening as members of GC36. A special welcome to Fr. Arturo Sosa who as the new Superior General of the Society of Jesus is also the new Vice-Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Gregorian University. Certainly, this is not the first time that Fr. Arturo Sosa comes to the Gregorian. We are very proud and honoured that he came here as a scholastic for his theological studies and, more recently, as Delegate of Fr. Adolfo Nicolás. As Delegate, Fr. Arturo Sosa followed very closely the University life and programmes. Thank you very much, Fr. General, for being with us this evening.

In 1551, Saint Ignatius of Loyola opened in Rome a School of Grammar and Christian Doctrine which was very soon transformed into the Roman College where, a few years later, courses in Philosophy and Theology were introduced. In the same century itself, pope Gregory XIII built the new premises that we can still admire at Piazza del Collegio Romano, not far from here. After the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the Roman College was run by the diocesan clergy of Rome and only in 1824, by the will of pope Leo XII, it was entrusted again to the restored Society of Jesus. In 1873, Pius IX wanted the Roman College to be named Pontifical Gregorian University in honour of its patron Gregory XIII.

Let us now revisit the Gregorian University of the 21st century. In the University mission statement, you can read that as a Pontifical University, rooted in the Ignatian spirit, we aim to form men and women from every culture in such a way as to enable them to find God wherever they may work and live. And according to his or her vocation, each one is called to bring the world to God so that God will be known to all peoples in their own languages and traditions.

In the very same spirit, Pope Francis, in the audience to the three institutions of the Consortium, the Gregorian, the Biblicum and the Oriental, in April 2014, said:

“You bring along the diversity of your local Churches with your own cultures. This is one of the inestimable riches for the institutions in Rome. It offers us a precious opportunity for growing in the faith as well as for opening the mind and heart to the horizon of catholicity”.

The Gregorian University receives students from 120 different countries or nationalities and it counted 2644 students at the end of the last academic year. We hope to see as many students in this academic year. The faculty includes 304 members, 86 being Jesuits from 31 different countries. The University is also enriched by the presence of 126 Jesuit students this year, since the formation of young Jesuits is also an integral aspect of our mission here in Rome.

I can confidently say that our formation and teaching is very much appreciated and respected by the bishops and superiors who send their best men and women to be formed at the Gregorian University.

Dear Friends in the Lord,

You represent the universal Society of Jesus and I would like to express to you our deepest gratitude for your sustained support and encouragement. You have contributed generously with human and material resources as well. You give us some of your best companions and we are very grateful to you. We will continue to ask you through Fr. General for some of your best men, and we are confident that you will pay heed despite the sacrifices it might entail to your provinces and regions. I can assure you that your generosity and sacrifice give us the possibility to serve better the universal Church and the Holy Father.

We are committed to deepen the collaboration among the three institutions that form the Academic Consortium entrusted to the Society of Jesus in Rome: The Gregorian University, the Biblical Institute and the Oriental Institute. We know that you all as well as Fr. General are asking us to work in closer collaboration, respecting, at the same time, the identity of each institution. It is a hard road indeed that must be travelled, but we are all committed to walk that road together.

Again, many thanks for your presence here today and for all the work you are doing here in Rome these days for the good of the whole Society of Jesus. Be assured of our prayers for you.

28.10.2016