



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE GRAND CHANCELLOR OF THE "PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA
ARGENTINA"
FOR THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY**

[Multimedia]

To my Venerable Brother Cardinal

Mario Aurelio Poli

Grand Chancellor of the Catholic University of Argentina

Dear Brother,

The celebration of 100 years of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University is an important moment for the Church in Argentina. This anniversary coincides with that of 50 years from the closing of the Second Vatican Council, which was an updating, a re-reading of the Gospel from the perspective of contemporary culture. It produced an irreversible movement of renewal which comes from the Gospel. And now, we must go forward.

How, then, do we go forward? Teaching and studying theology means living on a frontier, one in which the Gospel meets the needs of the people to whom it should be proclaimed in an understandable and meaningful way. We must guard against a theology that is exhausted in academic dispute or one that looks at humanity from a glass castle. You learn so as to live: theology and holiness are inseparable.

Let the theology that you elaborate therefore be rooted and based on Revelation, on Tradition, but also correspond with the cultural and social processes, in particular difficult transitions. At this time theology must address conflicts: not only those that we experience within the Church, but also those that concern the world as a whole and those which are lived on the streets of Latin America. Do not settle for a desktop theology. Your place for reflection is the frontier. Do not fall into the temptation to embellish, to add fragrance, to adjust them to some degree and domesticate them. Even good theologians, like good shepherds, have the odour of the people and of the street and,

by their reflection, pour oil and wine onto the wounds of mankind.

Theology is an expression of a Church which is a “field hospital”, which lives her mission of salvation and healing in the world. Mercy is not just a pastoral attitude but it is the very substance of the Gospel of Jesus. I encourage you to study how the various disciplines — dogma, morality, spirituality, law, and so on — may reflect the centrality of mercy.

Without mercy our theology, our law, our pastoral care run the risk of collapsing into bureaucratic narrow-mindedness or ideology, which by their nature seeks to domesticate the mystery. Understanding theology is understanding God, who is Love.

Who then is the student of theology that the UCA is called to form? Certainly not a “museum” theologian who gathers data and information on Revelation without, however, really knowing what to do with it. Nor a passive onlooker on history. The theologian formed at the UCA should be a person capable of building humanity around him, passing on the divine Christian truth in a truly human dimension, and not a talentless intellectual, an ethicist lacking in goodwill or a bureaucrat of the sacred.

I ask Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom and Mother of Divine Grace, to accompany us in the celebration of this centenary. I ask you to greet the students, staff, professors and the Faculty leaders, who do not forget to pray for me. May Jesus bless you and may the Holy Virgin protect you.

Fraternally,

From the Vatican, 3 March 2015

FRANCIS