



# The Holy See

---

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO CARDINAL DE DONATIS FOR THE INAUGURATION  
OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR OF THE PONTIFICAL LATERAN UNIVERSITY**

To the Venerable Brother  
Mr. Cardinal Angelo De Donatis  
*Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Lateran University*

1. The desire for peace expressed by the human family has always seen the Church expend herself generously in making every effort to contribute to freeing men and women from the horrors of war and to alleviate its dangerous consequences. Even in the present time, with the increasing need to prevent and resolve conflicts, the Church, in the light of the Gospel, feels called on to inspire and support every initiative that aims to ensure the diverse Peoples and Countries a path to peace, the fruit of that authentic dialogue capable of extinguishing hatred, of abandoning selfishness and self-referentiality, of overcoming any ambition for power or to oppress the weakest and the least.

This intention presupposes first and foremost a disciplined effort to listen and to understand, but also to learn and to study the legacy of values, of the ideas and instruments capable of overcoming tendencies toward isolation, closure, and the logic of force that lead to violence and destruction. Means of reconciliation, forms of transitional justice, guarantees of sustainable development, protection and the care of creation are some of the instruments that can open the way to forms of peaceful conflict resolution, to eradicate careerism and dominating attitudes and thereby form people dedicated unreservedly to the service of the cause of mankind.

In order to be a credible mediator in the face of global public opinion, the Church is called to foster “solutions to problems affecting peace, social harmony, the land, the defence of life, human and civil rights” (Apostolic Exhortation *[Evangelii gaudium](#) 65*). A task that is also carried out through the work that the Holy See conducts in the International Community and in its institutions by employing the instruments of diplomacy to overcome conflicts with peaceful means and mediation,

the promotion and respect of fundamental human rights, the integral development of Peoples and Countries.

2. In pursuit of this goal the university world has a central role as the symbolic place of that integral humanism that constantly needs to be renewed and enriched, so as to be able to produce a courageous cultural renovation that the current moment requires. This challenge also addresses the Church which, with her global network of ecclesial Universities, can “offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas”, as I recently recalled in reforming the rules of academic studies in ecclesial institutions (cf. Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium*, n. 2). This certainly does not seek to change the institutional meaning and consolidated traditions of our academic institutions, but rather to direct the function in the perspective of a more markedly ‘outgoing’ and missionary Church. Indeed it is possible to meet the challenges of the contemporary world with a capacity of response that offers appropriate content and compatible language to address, first and foremost, the new generations. Thus, this is the task that is entrusted to us: to embody the Word of God for the Church and for humanity of the third millennium. And, in doing so, it is important that students and teachers feel they are pilgrims called to proclaim the Good News to all peoples, unafraid to take risks and to dream of peace for all people and all nations.

3. Therefore, enlivened by the desire to introduce this patrimony of values and actions into an academic sphere and to vest it with a scientific approach, I institute at this Pontifical University, which in a specific way participates in the mission of the Bishop of Rome, an academic programme in *Peace Studies*, as a course of study which coincides with the theological, philosophical, juridical, economic and social spheres according to the criterion of an *inter-disciplinary* and *cross-disciplinary* approach (cf. *ibid.*, n. 4 c). The curricular structure will therefore employ a combination of courses taught by the Faculties and the Institutes of the Lateran University in order to award the academic degrees of Baccalaureate and License at the conclusion of, respectively, an initial three-year programme, and a two-year specialization course.

4. Through you, Your Eminence, I entrust the new academic programme to the university, assigning it to the direction of the Rector Magnificus, in order to guarantee a specific scientific formation of priests, consecrated and lay people. Diocesan Bishops, Military Ordinaries, Episcopal Conferences, men and women Superiors of the various forms of consecrated life, leaders of lay associations and movements, and all those who so desire, may look to the Peace Studies programme with confidence, in order to promote an appropriate preparation for current and future peace workers.

With this task I hope that, in daily service to the See of Peter, the entire community of the Lateran University — professors, students and all staff members — may feel involved in sowing the seeds of the culture of peace. A task that begins with listening, professionalism and dedication, always

accompanied by humility, meekness, and the will to be everything to everyone.

To the protection of my two Predecessor Saints, John XXIII and Paul VI, genuine heralds of peace in the world and who have so greatly contributed to the development of the Magisterium in this sphere, I commit this new fruit of the Church's solicitude, entrusting it to Mary *Queen of Peace*, that she may help us to understand and to live that fraternity that her Son's heart asks and from which true peace derives.

From the Vatican, 12 November 2018

Memorial of Bl. John of Peace

**Francis**