



# The Holy See

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## **MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER ON THE OCCASION OF THE 24th PUBLIC SESSION OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMIES**

*To my Venerable Brother  
Cardinal GIANFRANCO RAVASI  
President of the Pontifical Council for Culture  
and of the Coordinating Council of the Pontifical Academies*

I address you on the occasion of the 24th Solemn Public Session of the Pontifical Academies, an event which, thanks to the reform desired by Saint [Saint John Paul II](#) in 1995, marks the journey of the seven Academies joined under the Coordinating Council presided by you, and with the conferral of the Award, this event highlights an important moment of their commitment to the service of the Church's theology, culture and pastoral life. I offer my most cordial greeting to the Cardinals, Bishops, Ambassadors, members of the Academies and to all the friends gathered here.

The Academy is a place where knowledge becomes service because there is no genuine and integral human development without knowledge that is borne out of collaboration and that leads to cooperation. In its field, the Academy is an experience and an example of synodality. It is also a force for evangelization that belongs to the present of the Church and of her mission (cf. [Evangelii Gaudium](#), 83). The award I have the pleasure of conferring today aims to be a kind of invitation to celebrate the ever fruitful bond between the Gospel and culture.

This 24th edition was organized by the Pontifical International Marian Academy which this very year is celebrating the 60th anniversary of its founding on 8 December 1959 by Saint John XXIII. I congratulate Father Stefano Cecchin and the respective Academicians for their commitment in promoting Mariological knowledge and favouring an authentic Marian piety. This Academy thus represents a place similar to “*Casa di Maria*” where Jesus grew in “wisdom and in stature” (Luke 2:52) and where, as a welcoming mother and attentive spouse, the Virgin teaches us to be a “living cenacle”.

The theme chosen for this Public Session: “Mary, way to peace among cultures”, ideally summarises the journey of these past 60 years. The dramatic experience of the two world wars prompted [Pius XII](#) to shed a beacon of peace on the agitated and frightened humanity, in the figure of Our Lady of the Assumption. Then [Vatican Council II](#) pointed out the mother of the Lord as an example of a Church, a “teacher of humanity” to serve the deepest aspirations of the human heart.

With [Saint Paul VI](#), the bond between the Blessed virgin and believers resounds high and clear, conscious and passionate. He wrote the following in [Marialis Cultus](#): “To modern man, torn as he often is between anguish and hope, defeated by the sense of his own limitations and assailed by limitless aspirations, troubled in his mind and divided in his heart, uncertain before the riddle of death, oppressed by loneliness while yearning for fellowship, a prey to boredom and disgust. She shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death” (n. 57).

[Saint John Paul II](#) acknowledged the Mother of the Saviour as a motive and an inspiration for a renewed encounter and a rediscovered fraternity; paths to access the Church and the world of the new millennium. For this reason, he wanted Mariology to have its due role in university theological formation and in dialogue with other disciplines. He also hoped that Mariology would come to be a part of the crucial questions of our time.

Lastly, [Benedict XVI](#) exhorted scholars to study more fully the relationship between Mariology and the theology of the Word. “This could prove most beneficial both for the spiritual life and for theological and biblical studies. Indeed, what the understanding of the faith has enabled us to know about Mary stands at the heart of Christian truth” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation [Verbum Domini](#), 27).

The Pontifical International Marian Academy has accompanied the Universal Magisterium of the Church with research and coordination of Marian studies; with the International Mariological-Marian Conferences, whose 25th anniversary will be celebrated next year; through collaboration with the various centres for ecclesiastical and lay study and lastly, through cooperation among various academic institutions. These commitments are a clear testament to the fact that Mariology is a necessary presence for dialogue among cultures and is capable of nourishing fraternity and peace.

Wishing, therefore, to promote and encourage theological research and particularly the kind aimed at exploring Mariological themes, I am happy to confer the Pontifical Academies Award to Dr Carme López Calderón for the work: *Grabados de Augsburg para un ciclo emblemático portugués. Los azulejos de la iglesia del convento de Jesús de Setúbal*, and to Doctor Fr Ionu-Cătălin Blidar for his study entitled *L’umanità immacolata di Maria — icona del logos di Dio, compimento della stirpe eletta e frutto dell’albero della croce. Un approccio ecumenico alla*

*mariologia immacolatista greco-latina (sec. II-XIV)*. Moreover, I am happy to award the medal of the Pontificate to the Croatian Mariological Institute.

I entrust each one of you to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Tenderness, may she always accompany your personal and academic path. I wholeheartedly impart to all of you, your families and communities, a Special Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 4 December 2019*

**FRANCIS**

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