



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY FEDERATION (FUCI)**

Clementine Hall

Friday, 9 November 2007

Dear Young Friends of FUCI,

This visit you are making at the conclusion of the 110th anniversary celebrations of the birth of your Association, FUCI, the Italian Catholic University Federation, is particularly welcome. I address to each one of you my cordial greeting, beginning with the National Presidents and the Prime Ecclesial Assistants, and I thank them for the words they addressed to me in your name. I greet Bishop Giuseppe Betori, General Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference, and Bishop Domenico Sigalini of Palestrina and Assistant General Chaplain of the Italian Catholic Action, who have accompanied you to this Audience and whose presence witnesses to how strongly FUCI is rooted in the Church in Italy. I greet the diocesan Chaplains and the members of the FUCI Foundation. To each one of you I renew the Church's appreciation for the work your Association does in the university world at the service of the Gospel.

FUCI is celebrating its 110 years: a fitting occasion to review the ground covered and its future prospects. Safeguarding the historic memory is valuable because, by considering the validity and consistency of its own roots, it is more enthusiastic in continuing the itinerary begun. On this joyful occasion, I willingly take up the words that approximately 10 years ago my Venerable and beloved Predecessor John Paul II addressed to you on the occasion of your centenary: "The history of the past 100 years", he said, "actually confirms that the FUCI experience is a significant chapter of the Church's life in Italy, especially of that vast and multiform lay movement which found in Catholic Action its main support" (*Discourse*, 29 April 1996; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 22 May, n. 3, p. 4).

How can one fail to recognize that FUCI has contributed to the formation of entire generations of

exemplary Christians, who have been able to transform the Gospel *into* life and *with* life, committing themselves on the cultural, civil, social and ecclesial levels? I am thinking in the first place of the young Blessed Piergiorgio Frassati and Alberto Marvelli. I recall illustrious personalities like Aldo Moro and Vittorio Bachelet, both barbarously assassinated. Nor can I forget my Venerable Predecessor Paul VI, who was an attentive and courageous General Ecclesial Chaplain of FUCI in the difficult years of Fascism, and also Bishop Emilio Guano and Bishop Franco Costa. Moreover, the recent 10 years have been characterized by FUCI's decisive commitment to rediscover its true university dimension. After several debates and heated discussions, Italy began during the mid-'90s a radical reform of its academic system, which now presents a new profile, rich in promising perspectives, combined, however, with elements that raise legitimate concern. And you, both at the recent Congresses and on the pages of the *Ricerca* journal, are constantly concerned with the new configuration of academic studies, the relative legislative modifications, the topic of student participation and the ways in which the global dynamics of communication affect formation and the transmission of knowledge.

It is precisely in this environment that FUCI can fully express even today its original and ever-current charism: the convinced witness of the "possible friendship" between intelligence and faith, which implies the ceaseless effort to unite maturation in faith with growth in studies and the acquisition of scientific knowledge. In this context the expression so dear to you, "To believe in study" is meaningful. In effect, why should one who holds the faith renounce the freedom to seek the truth, and why should one who freely seeks the truth renounce the faith? Instead, it is possible, precisely during the university years and thanks to them, to realize an authentic human, scientific and spiritual maturation. "To believe in study" means to recognize that study and research - especially during the university years - have an intrinsic power to widen the horizons of human intelligence, as long as academic study remains demanding, rigorous, serious, methodical and progressive. Indeed, on these conditions, it represents an advantage for the global formation of the human person, as Bl. Giuseppe Tovini used to say, observing that with study young people would never have been poor, while without study they would never have been rich.

At the same time, study constitutes a providential opportunity to advance on the journey of faith, because a well-cultivated intelligence opens the heart of man to listen to the voice of God, emphasizing the importance of discernment and humility. I referred precisely to the value of humility at the [recent *Agorà* \[meeting\] at Loreto](#), when I exhorted Italian youth not to follow the dictates of pride, but rather, the realistic sense of life open to the transcendent dimension. Today, as in the past, whoever wants to be a disciple of Christ is called to go against the tide, not to be attracted by the interesting and persuasive appeals which come from various platforms that propagandize behaviour marked by arrogance and violence, presumption and gaining success by every means. Contemporary society is marked by such an unbridled race for appearances and possessions and unfortunately to the detriment of being, and the Church, expert in humanity, does not tire to exhort especially the young generations to which you belong, to remain vigilant and not to be afraid to choose "alternative" ways that only Christ can indicate.

Yes, dear friends, Jesus summons all his friends to characterize their existence by a sober, solidary way of life, to weave sincere and free emotional relationships with others. He asks you, dear young students, to commit yourselves honestly to study, cultivating a mature sense of responsibility and a shared interest in the common good. The university years are therefore a training ground for convinced and courageous Gospel witness. To accomplish your mission, seek to cultivate an intimate friendship with the divine Teacher, placing yourself at the school of Mary, Seat of Wisdom. I entrust you to her maternal intercession and, while I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I warmly impart to all with affection a special Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to your families and loved ones.

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