



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 18TH 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*

On the occasion of the 18th Public Session of the Pontifical Academies, I am pleased to convey my cordial greetings to you, which I gladly extend to the Presidents, the Academicians, as well to the Cardinals, Bishops, Ambassadors and to all the participants.

This year's session, intentionally convened on the day of the liturgical memorial of St Thomas Aquinas, has been organized by the Pontifical Academy named after him and by the Pontifical Academy of Theology. Its theme is: "*Oculata fides*. Interpreting reality with the eyes of Christ". This theme recalls an expression of the *Doctor Angelicus* quoted in the Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*. I thank you for having chosen to reflect on this theme and as well as on the relationship between the Encyclical and the recent Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In both of these Documents, in fact, I wished to invite the Church to reflect on the "luminous" dimension of faith and on the connection between faith and truth, which should be investigated not only with the eyes of the mind but also with those of the heart, that is, within the perspective of love. St Paul states: "One believes with the heart" (Rom 10:10). "Through this blending of faith and love we come to see the kind of knowledge which faith entails, its power to convince and its ability to illumine our steps. Faith knows because it is tied to love, because love itself brings enlightenment. Faith's understanding is born when we receive the immense love of God which transforms us inwardly and enables us to see reality with new eyes" (*Lumen Fidei*, n. 26). In the days following Jesus' Resurrection, his disciples did not contemplate a purely interior or abstract truth, but rather a truth disclosed to them in the encounter with the Risen One, in the

contemplation of his life and of his mysteries. Rightly did St Thomas Aquinas speak of *an oculata fides*, a faith which sees! (cf. *ibid.*, n. 30).

This leads to important consequences both for the actions of believers and for the method of work proper to theologians: “Truth nowadays is often reduced to the subjective authenticity of the individual, valid only for the life of the individual. A common truth intimidates us, for we identify it with the intransigent demands of totalitarian systems. But if truth is a truth of love, if it is a truth disclosed in the personal encounter with the Other and with others, then it can be set free from its enclosure in individuals and become part of the common good.... Far from making us inflexible, the security of faith sets us on a journey; it enables witness and dialogue with all” (*ibid.*, 34).

This perspective — of an entire Church on a journey and entirely missionary — was developed in the Apostolic Exhortation on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world. The “dream of a ‘missionary option’ ... capable of transforming everything” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 27) regards the whole Church and every part of her. The Pontifical Academies are also called to this transformation, so that their contribution may not be lacking to the ecclesial Body. It is not a matter of exterior work carried out “on the façade”. It is rather a matter, also for you, of concentrating more “on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary” (*ibid.*, 35). In this way, “the message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing” (*ibid.*). Therefore, beloved and esteemed brothers and sisters, I ask for your qualified collaboration in the service of the mission of the whole Church.

In order to encourage all of those, including young scholars and theologians, who wish to offer their own contribution to promoting and attaining a new Christian humanism through their research, I am delighted to award *ex aequo* the Pontifical Academies Award, dedicated this year to theological research and to the study of the works of St Thomas Aquinas, to two young scholars: Rev. Prof. Alessandro Clemenza for the work *Nella Trinità come Chiesa. In dialogo con Heribert Mühlen*, and to Prof. Maria Silvia Vaccarezza for her work entitled: *Le ragioni del contingente. La saggezza pratica tra Aristotele e Tommaso d’Aquino*.

Finally, wishing the Academicians and all those present a fruitful engagement in their respective fields of research, I entrust each of you to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, *Sedes Sapientiae*, I ask you to remember me and my ministry in prayer, and I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 28 January 2014*

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