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Holy Mass for the inauguration of the academic year of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart

The following is the homily pronounced by the substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State, H.E. Msgr. Edgar Peña Parra, during this morning's Holy Mass for the inauguration of the academic year of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart:

Homily

Dear brothers and sisters,

We are here at the Eucharistic table for the inauguration of the academic year of this Catholic athenaeum. Let us invoke divine assistance for the students, for whom the new academic year will be a milestone in the decisive phase of scientific and professional formation; on the teaching staff called to offer renewed dedication in the delicate formative role of the new generations. I gladly accepted the invitation to preside at this Holy Mass and am pleased to offer my warm greeting to those present. In particular, I address a thought first and foremost to the rector, Professor Franco Anelli, to the academic staff, to the dear Msgr. Claudio Giuliodori, assistant general, and to the priests with whom he collaborates. I also respectfully greet the other authorities gathered here.

Today's Gospel reading (*Mk* 4: 21-25), illuminates this celebration of ours, as well as the cultural and spiritual path that the Catholic University is following in this new academic year. Jesus, after saying to the apostles that he had entrusted to them the mystery of the Kingdom of God, compares it to a lamp. And since this must not be placed under a bushel or under the bed, but rather clearly visible on the candelabrum so that it may provide light, likewise the mystery of the Kingdom of God must not be kept hidden, that is, kept only for themselves, as if they were an elect group. That mystery should certainly have been penetrated and understood with all the effort of their intelligence, but at the same time the apostles were called to manifest it to all, spreading it widely up to the very edges of the earth. Indeed, Jesus warns: "For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open" (v. 22).

And it is precisely what Jesus did first. From the moment when He left Nazareth, He began His public preaching,

walking the streets of Galilee. The purpose of His mission was to communicate to all the closeness of the Kingdom of God, or rather the love of the Father for all and in particular for the poorest. Seeing the divine Master at work, the people perceived that truly light had come to the world – as Saint John writes in the Prologue – and it was no longer “under the bushel”, but instead shone on the candelabrum. And the crowd became aware of this to the point that they came from all around to be illuminated, to receive a light that drove away the darkness of a life that was often sorrowful and difficult.

The image of light that exists to illuminate others, and certainly not oneself, describes well the life and mission of Jesus. He is the true light that illuminates every man; He did not come for Himself, He was not incarnated to realize Himself not to affirm a personal project of His own. Jesus came on earth to enlighten the path of man towards salvation. He came so that everyone, listening to His word, may travel the paths of existence until they reach heaven. The disciples that He continues to call throughout the centuries, from generation to generation, are invited to do likewise: or rather, not to hide the light of the Gospel that they have received, nor to adopt narrow measures for communicating this light to the world.

He Himself reminds us in today’s Gospel: “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (v. 24). It is an invitation to have an open and merciful heart like that of the Father Who is in heaven. And God’s generosity has been ample with us: He gave us His Son so that we would welcome Him and make Him known to others. It is on a similar generosity that we will be judged. Indeed, Jesus clarifies to His disciples: “Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them” (v. 25). Love and generosity, according to the Gospel, cannot bear restrictions and limitations: the heart of the believer is universal and open to all.

This means offering clear Christian witness in every environment in which we are called to live and to work. In this apostolic effort we have the certainty of being supported by the Holy Spirit, He Who guides the disciples to the fullness of truth. And it is more appropriate than ever to keep in mind this work of the Spirit in the context of a university community, where the dialogue between faith in Christ and scientific research unfolds daily. When Jesus spoke to the apostles in the Cenacle, He had in mind His Church that, thanks to the gift of the Spirit, would have been able to understand fully His message of salvation. This occurred in a fundamental and extraordinary way in the Pentecost, but it then continued in ordinary life in individuals and in communities, as in other exceptional events that Providence offered throughout the centuries. Therefore, to absolve effectively the mission of bearing witness to Jesus and to His Gospel, every person, every believer and every community, including that of the university, must enter, so to speak, in the range of action of Pentecost and entrust itself constantly to the enlightening action of the Spirit of truth.

Today, with this liturgical celebration, we wish to place ourselves joyfully in the “range of action” of that event, invoking with faith the gift of the Holy Spirit, by the intercession of Mary Most Holy, Seat of Wisdom. We invoke this so that in the year that is beginning, this university community may live fully its vocation and mission within the Church and in the service of her mission in the world. This university is distinguished by the adjective of “Catholic”, which was wished by the founder, Fr. Agostino Gemelli, which recalls the ecclesial nature of the Institute, that is, its collocation within the mission of the Church. We are well aware that the ecclesial nature of a community is never to be taken for granted. Even the title of “Catholic” is not enough to guarantee it! It is a gift that demands always to be received and revived with faith and generous commitment.

Indeed, it is good to acknowledge that every generation of professors and students is called, in the invocation and reception of the Holy Spirit, to collaborate so that the University may be what it should be, that is, “Catholic”. The “Catholicity” of the academic community and of university work consists in an impassioned effort of reflection on the entire reality in the light of Christ’s ministry, upon which there depends the elaboration of a Christian culture open to the understanding of all. If Christ is the truth that enlightens, frees and gives meaning to life, if He is the complete response to the deep and irremovable questions of mankind, the truth that is Christ, precisely in the Catholic Universities must make itself a light for others, for the world. And this is very different to a label given to an institution once and for all; neither can it be the task only of an academic summit or of the heads of university pastoral care. Rather, it is a gift and a commitment that brings into play the willingness and obedience of all to the action of the Spirit.

Therefore, let us invoke, for the year that is beginning, the light of the Holy Spirit, that it may illumine and guide your research and your daily scholastic effort.
