

AY2022 Graduation Ceremony
Congratulatory Speech from the President

Congratulations everyone. I would also like to extend my congratulations to your parents and everyone who has supported you. Acquiring an academic degree marks the starting point of a new stage in life. I have been looking forward to personally congratulating you and celebrating your new endeavors on behalf of everyone at Sophia University. I am sure that given the sudden changes that you experienced in your student life, this graduation day bears a special meaning for you. I would like to express my respect to you for overcoming various challenges and successfully acquiring your degree.

The social chaos that we were faced with at the beginning of the pandemic remains fresh in our memories. We all experienced this confusion, regardless of whether we lived in Japan or overseas and regardless of age or occupation. Especially because we live in times when travelling across borders has become very easy, the chaos became widespread in an instant and to an extent hardly imaginable. As the world struggled to minimize the impact of the chaos brought by the pandemic, Ukraine became caught in a war that will be remembered in history. How many people were able to foresee all of this happening several years ago? I had always believed that globalization was supported by the ideal vision of people in a global society living together harmoniously, but this has become a shattered illusion. We witnessed the fact that human society is still very vulnerable and that it could not even guarantee human safety. Then while we were focused on the developments of the war, a great earthquake occurred in Turkey and Syria. Humans have prospered on Earth, which is the only choice we have. And now we have renewed our acknowledgement that we on Earth do not choose the times and places of strikes at scales that are apparently of a completely different dimension. I would like to take this opportunity to remember those who have fallen victim to these incidents and to express my heartfelt sympathy to those who are currently struggling with these difficulties.

The fact that these tragedies occurred one after the other during the short period of time that you spent as students will bear a unique monumental meaning in the long history of human society and across the future. However, we must not be helpless in the face of unpredicted or unwanted social change. We must not compromise our beliefs or will. And we must not abandon walking with others, especially the vulnerable. Because we live in such times, it is important that we hold on to our passion and the

ideals that we have about society. Do you still have the plans and dreams that you envisioned when you decided to go to university or graduate school? Are they waiting for their time?

The research and studies that you have experienced not only help sharpen your skills but polish the human wisdom embraced by society. Now, you have a clear role to play in society. You also have a powerful driving force in your life. For whom will you play this role? For what will you exert this driving force? Your answer is most likely the very meaning of your life. You are a part of human wisdom. The wisdom embraced by human society will guide it through difficulties and lead it in the right direction. I am sure that when you become a part of this exercise, your lives will be colorful. I do not expect you to walk glamorous paths. There is no need for feeling successful by following someone else's values to make them happy. I do not wish for success without a will. I hope that you will draw your lives based on your individuality, supported by the justice that you believe in and by the spirit of "For Others, With Others." I hope that your lives will be filled with originality and be supported by convictions strong enough to even turn failure into confidence.

Fr Juan Haidar SJ from the Catholic Jesuit Center just introduced a passage from the Gospel of Matthew: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat." This action represents the meaning of how we address others, or the vulnerable. Jesus says, whatever you did, "you did for me." I believe that this means that if we act caring for others, then each of our actions will have a large impact on society. I would like each of you to think about your individual roles in society. As a member of the Sophia Family, the way you live your life supported by the spirit of "For Others, With Others," will guide human society itself.

You are the last students who have known some university life before the pandemic. I am sure that while you felt very grateful to your peers, seniors and juniors, as well as faculty and staff members for being there, you were very mindful of how to connect with them. I hope that your ties as Sophia Family members will become stronger and continue into the future. Your alma mater is a place that will always welcome you back. It is a place where you can always reconnect. When you visit campus, it will be filled with new faces. However, wherever we are in the world, if we meet someone for the first time and he or she is a Sophian, we already have an "established connection" under Sophia's name. Sophian ties are strong but flexible. Regardless of your social status, you can always rely on this network, both physically and mentally. This sense

of comfort is the beauty of the Sophian Family.

I sincerely hope that this Graduation Ceremony will add a meaningful essence to your life and to the justice towards which our society should be directed. Congratulations on your graduation.

March 28, 2023
Yoshiaki Terumichi
President, Sophia University