

AY 2023 Graduation Ceremony 24-3

Congratulations on your graduation. I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to your parents and all those concerned. I have been looking forward to this opportunity to congratulate and wish you all the very best on behalf of Sophia University. Above all, while delivering my congratulatory address to you today, I would also like to express my sincere respect to all of you who have overcome the challenges presented by COVID-19 and have successfully acquired your degrees.

I believe our daily lives can be roughly divided into three categories: One is the time that we spend carrying out our so-called “daily routines” in our various everyday circumstances. For example, for you up to now, this could be coming to university, attending classes, participating in club activities, and studying both at home and outside your home. The second category is the time you use to consciously create challenges or pleasure for yourselves. This could be the time spent on creatively working towards the ambitious goals that you have set up for yourself in your club activities, or the time you spend on your days off engaging yourself in activities that you are not usually involved in to refresh yourself. The last category is the time that you inevitably need to spend dealing with or facing matters caused by unexpected or unanticipated external factors. It is our daily desire to spend as little time as possible dealing with these situations. However, we cannot eliminate the occurrence of this kind of time, and it seems to me that we are constantly compelled to deal with these unforeseen and unexpected external factors, to a greater or lesser extent, in our daily lives.

I believe that the most significant event that you have recently been forced to deal with unexpectedly and unanticipatedly is the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the same for all of us. COVID-19 was an unforeseen and unexpected disaster for all of us at the university, including faculty and staff, to Japanese society, and to everyone across the world. Of course, the university was no exception. We were required to respond in unexperienced ways to maintain our learning environment, maintain our quality of education, and seek new forms of education. I would like to mention the hard and dedicated efforts and commitment of our faculty and staff under these circumstances. Many voluntary efforts, including those of our students, also contributed to good outcomes. There has not been a day that I have forgotten how grateful I am to the many people who supported us.

However, it is not difficult to imagine that you also found yourselves in very unique situations. For those of you who had finally reached the milestone of starting university that year, the extraordinary suddenly emerged, placing you in a new lifestyle almost of a different dimension, and causing you to explore new ways of learning and to deal with communication breakdowns that you had not experienced before. As a university, we greatly regret the chaos that occurred. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our sincere apologies if you felt in any way that our support for you was insufficient. It is with your understanding and cooperation that Sophia University continues to be what

it is today. Although I myself cannot make up for all the frustrations felt towards university administration then, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to you on behalf of the university. Thank you for allowing me to take this opportunity today to express the university's thoughts to you.

Earlier, the Director of the Catholic Jesuit Center(*) introduced a passage from the Book of John. It is a teaching about the ongoing study of the peace-loving person. As seekers of true peace, we are in need of existential learning. Unfortunately, our daily lives are flooded with news of various events that undermine peace. I hope that all of you will reflect upon your own roles, continue learning in the broader sense, and continue to be seekers of peace. I believe that the major turning point when the ordinary becomes the extraordinary can also be described to be when peace disappears on various levels.

The way we use time in our daily lives also defines the trajectory of our lives. As I mentioned at the beginning, the way we spend our time can be divided into several categories, and how we unconsciously allocate that time is what shapes our lives. However, as we look ahead to the future of global society, it is necessary not only to devise creative ways to spend our daily lives, but also to prepare ourselves with the ability to cope with, resist, and overcome the sudden emergence of extraordinary circumstances. Natural disasters, infectious diseases, the growing complexity of international relations, and the instability of the global economy are just a few of the many factors that may potentially lead to extraordinary events. Having already overcome some great hardships, those of you who are celebrating your graduation today need not be intimidated by future developments of society. Challenges can sometimes be transformed into opportunities, which can also be opportunities for change. Your forward-looking, proactive approach to take on new challenges is what is important. As graduates of Sophia University and Sophia University's Graduate Schools, whose educational philosophy is "For Others, With Others," I sincerely hope that you will turn your eyes keenly toward the vulnerable as you take on these challenges.

Congratulations on your graduation.

March 25, 2024

Yoshiaki Terumichi, President of Sophia University

(*)Morning Session: Fr. Firmansyah, Catholic Jesuit Center

Afternoon Session: Director of Catholic Jesuit Center