

## **Message of the Chancellor on the Occasion of the Graduation Ceremony Autumn, 2024**

My dear graduating students, I wish to convey my sincere greetings to all of you, who are proudly graduating from Sophia University today. It is a moment of thankfulness and joy for all of us, and on this propitious occasion, I wish to share this joy with your parents, guarantors, and all other benefactors.

To you who are currently at the threshold of your graduation, I have a question to ask. Do you wish to have a world better than the one in which we now live? Striving for a better world is a vital issue for each one of us. Our University was founded on the principles of Jesuit education that highlight the holistic development of persons, by nurturing their intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. In that integral perspective, if we look around the world, we will find that we are born into an unjust society. But it should be our determination not to leave this society as we have found it.

Today, I want you all to reflect on how you can serve as instruments, in making this world a better place. How do we awaken within ourselves a resolve, never to leave this world as we have found it. I myself feel our educational spirit of “For Others, With Others” may be abridged into a single word, namely, COMPASSION. I believe compassion is intrinsic to all human beings, yet each of us needs to strive diligently, in order to promote and expand our capacity for it. To do so however, we need to: (1) Learn about compassion. (2) Take a look at our own world. (3) Be compassionate towards ourselves. (4) Adopt an attitude of empathy and concern for all. (5) Be authentic and active.

Being compassionate is not the same as being naïve, since it involves competence as well. Let me tell you a story of how by being compassionate we can become persons for others, and how by being with those who are vulnerable, we ourselves can grow stronger. It is a story concerning numbers, from number 1 to number 10.

One day, number 9 started hitting at number 8 for no reason at all. Number 8 was shocked and pained, and asked number 9, “Why did you hurt me?” Number 9 replied, “Well, I am stronger and more valuable than you, and you cannot win against me; so I can hit you. That is why I hurt you.” Then, number 8 turned towards number 7 started hurting, and when number 7 asked the same question, number 8 gave the same logic and reply he had received from number 9. Then it continued that number 7 turned to number 6; 6 to 5; 5 to 4; 4 to 3; 3 to 2. Finally, number 2 started hurting number 1, using the same logic and reason of being stronger and more valuable.

Now, what could number 1 do? Number 1 saw before him only number 0, which was valueless, worthless, and weak when compared to the other numbers. Yet, number 1 turned towards the valueless number 0, raised him up, and kept him beside himself, and together they became number 10, who was far more valuable than any of the other numbers.

This is the magic and logic of being for and with others. Being competent by becoming compassionate. You can become strong and valuable by being with the vulnerable and weak. It is a way of considering the educational spirit of Sophia University, as being, “For Others and With Others.”

Jesus once said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Lk. 5, 31-2). Now, as you embark as graduates upon the next stage of your lives, I urge you to carry the torch of the Sophia educational spirit with you. You who are graduates of Sophia should reflect upon your mission, regardless of the jobs you choose. May the experiences and values you gained during your time here, guide you in your pursuit of quality and service to society. Always bear in mind that education is not just a means to an end, but a lifelong journey of growth and discovery.

In closing, I wish to communicate my sincere compliments to each and every one of you. Your hard work, devotion, and resilience have brought you to this moment of accomplishment. As you step out into the world, know that Sophia University is always here to sustain and inspire you. May you continue to embody the spirit of Jesuit education, making a positive impact on the world and leaving a lasting legacy.

Thank you, and congratulations once again.

September 20, 2024  
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