

Entrance Ceremony Address 2024.09

Congratulations to all the new students on your enrollment at Sophia University. I would also like to extend my hearty congratulations to your parents and everyone concerned. It is a great pleasure for us to be able to hold this ceremony with all of you gathered here from all over Japan and from all over the world.

Sophia University is celebrating its 111th year since its foundation in 1913. Looking back over this period, many historical events have taken place in Japan and on the world stage. While there have been many positive events in the history of human and global society, we cannot overlook the unfortunate events that still cast a shadow over us. One hundred-eleven years is a little longer than a human lifetime, considering our average lifespan. In these times, it is not significantly longer than a human lifetime, but only slightly longer. It is important to consider this time scale. How much has our society and the Earth experienced during this period of time that can be compared to the length of a human lifetime? While technological innovation and economic growth have transformed our lives, allowing us to enjoy a world of convenience, we have also accumulated a negative legacy, including the degradation of the global environment, as well as wars and conflicts. It can be said that Sophia University has evolved sharing the experiences of these times with society. Sophia University started with three faculties and has since then developed into a university of 12,000 students enrolled in 9 faculties and 29 departments, as well as 10 graduate schools, pursuing our way of being "For Others, With Others" guided by the philosophy of Jesuit education. This development can be said to be the result of our continuous efforts to respond to the questions of what kind of research and education should be conducted here in Tokyo, and what kind of results should be disseminated in society, while taking into account the social context of each moment and with a social perspective.

In the same way, we can look back on the paths that you have taken so far. From the time of your earliest memories to the moment of your enrollment at Sophia University today, your journey has surely been not independent of the transformation of society. Of course, your active involvement in society may still have been limited. But what is certain is that now is the time for you to think: What kind of era will you live in? What kind of planet will you live on? How will you fulfill your roles? How will your past efforts be linked to your future endeavors?

We all play a role as a member of society, whether as an individual or as part of an organization. Finding that role is not a spontaneous decision but is based on the beliefs and aspirations that come from your daily experiences of thinking, acting, interacting with others, observing society, and conversing with your family and friends. Your admission to Sophia University can also be said to be a choice you have made as a result of the culmination of your past experiences. You have entered a new realm of experiences that will shape your beliefs and aspirations through your studies, your interactions with faculty and staff, your friendships, and your extracurricular activities at Sophia University.

Beliefs and aspirations are not derived from information given to you. Nor can AI tell you what your own beliefs and aspirations are. Moreover, you cannot formulate a plan for when and where you will form your beliefs and aspirations. They are unconsciously formed as a result of the path you have taken, the footprints you have left behind, and the experiences you have encountered along the way, willingly or unwillingly, and you will come to recognize them naturally. When you are clearly aware of your beliefs and aspirations, they become a symbol of your individuality. It is not easy for others to understand your beliefs and aspirations. They are not like the functions of a household electrical appliance that can be understood by reading the manual. This is because they are based on the experience of the individual.

We hope that you will have a unique experience here at Sophia University. We hope that you will not only study the curriculum, but also enjoy a student life filled with originality through discussions with your professors, taking on the challenges of study abroad and training programs, conversations with your friends, extracurricular activities, and so on. After four years, many of you will make a choice to advance to graduate school or go out into the world of business, etc. We hope that it will be a decision that you make with confidence based on your beliefs and aspirations.

Earlier, Fr Firmansyah of the Catholic Jesuit Center, introduced a passage from the Book of Matthew. Contrasting the powerful position of the tax collector with the weak position of the sinner, He asks us not to seek sacrifices, but to learn mercy. "Others" in the educational philosophy of Sophia University refers to the weak. We hope that you will always be mindful of the vulnerable in your studies at Sophia University, and pursue what mercy is. We hope that you will always be conscious of the educational philosophy of Sophia University, "For Others, With Others," in your diverse experiences as a university student, and that you will form your own beliefs and aspirations.

Congratulations on your enrollment.

September 21, 2024
Yoshiaki Terumichi
President, Sophia University