

Dear graduating students, I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to each one of you on your graduation today.

As you embark on a new journey with your degrees, I would like to express my respect for the fact that you have overcome various hardships and challenges, including the impact of COVID-19, to welcome this day. I would also like to offer my warmest congratulations to your parents, guarantors, and everyone else who has supported you.

Since its founding, Sophia University has upheld the educational philosophy of “for Others, with Others,” and has continued to provide an education that values the dignity of all people and aims to harmonize knowledge and the heart. This philosophy has an increasingly important meaning in contemporary society. In an era of widening divisions and conflicts, we are called to action based on justice, as well as understanding and empathy that transcend differences.

I am sure that your studies at Sophia University have helped you to mature intellectually and as human beings.

Now, how would you describe your studies at Sophia University? If I were to use the Bible as a reference, I think it would be something like a mustard seed. (According to Mark 4:30-32) “It is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.” I believe that you have all received words or had experiences like this seed while you were at Sophia University. At first, such seeds are not visible, but I can say with confidence that the seeds that sprout will grow over time and one day, they will bloom.

The learning and experiences offered at Sophia University were surely not limited to the acquisition of knowledge and skills but have supported the development of a conscience that cares for others and drives social action. What I would like you to especially value is the attitude of constantly asking yourself, “How can I make the best use of my strengths for the happiness of others?” while pursuing excellence in your own field of expertise.

Given the divisions and discriminatory trends in society, I would like to deliver two messages to those of you who have received the humanism-oriented education and diversity-based education that Sophia University has always valued. First, please become a person who “acknowledges diversity”. Acknowledging diversity does not mean merely tolerating and accepting the way others live. Acknowledging diversity means realizing that both your way of

life and the way others live are equally wonderful and learning from each other as you grow together. Even when we look at the same flower, it can reveal a completely different beauty depending on the angle from which we view it. The same is true when we look at people. If we change our perspective and look at others from various angles, we are sure to discover different aspects of beauty and unexpected, good qualities.

My second request is that you become a “authentic person”. From now on, you will all be taking on new challenges in your own respective fields. These paths will not always be easy, and you may face difficulties and hardships from time to time. However, I hope that on such occasions you will remember the values and lessons you learned at Sophia University and continue to forge ahead with sincerity and courage.

I still remember the moment in December 2012 at a cross-country competition in the Spanish region of Navarre when the Spanish runner Ivan Fernandez Anaya led the Kenyan racer Abel Mutai to victory; it was a moment that moved people around the world.

Mutai, the bronze medalist in the 3000m steeplechase at the London Olympics, has been leading the race and on course to win, but about 10 meters before the finish line, he stopped running, mistakenly thinking he had crossed the finish line. Anaya, who was in second place, a slight distance behind Mutai, realized what had happened and instead of passing Mutai and taking the lead, he used gestures to get Mutai back on track and let him finish first. Anaya came second in the competition, but I believe he was the winner in terms of his authenticity/sincerity.

We hope that you will become leaders who live “For Others, With Others” as people who acknowledge diversity and are sincere. By identifying issues in society and taking action, I hope you will become people who open up a new future. May your actions and aspirations serve as a driving force that brings hope and change to those around you.

Once again, congratulations on your graduation.

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Augustine Sali

Chancellor of Sophia School Corporation