

Dear New Sophians, let me convey my sincere congratulations to every one of you, on your successful entrance into Sophia University. Welcome to Sophia University. I would also like to offer my congratulations to your families. Let me welcome you all to the Sophia family.

Today, I would like to share a story I was told when I was in high school. It is the story of a doll made of salt that traveled in pursuit of knowing itself. Along the way, it encountered various people, and every time it asked them, “Who are you?” Continuing its quest, it finally reached the ocean. Unlike its previous encounters, the ocean was a subtly moving expanse, and the salt doll asked the ocean, “Who are you?”

The ocean smiled and replied,

“Come in and see for yourself.”

Hence, the doll jumped into the ocean. The deeper it went into the ocean, the more the doll dissolved, until finally there was only a tiny bit of its original shape left. Before the last piece dissolved, the doll cried out in excitement,

“Now I know who I am!”

I am sure that you have had many encounters and have knocked on many doors up until today. Now that you are starting a new chapter in your life, I imagine your hearts are filled with great hopes and dreams. You have just jumped into an ocean called Sophia University. Please dissolve into it and find your true self.

You will learn so many things during your time as a university student. Sophia University will support you in every way it can. Today, Sophia University welcomes a new president and is starting a new chapter. Together with our faculty and staff, they are prepared to fully support you.

Sophia University was established based on the founding spirit of fostering people who seek the truth and serve “For Others, With Others” based on Christian humanism philosophy. We aim to live our lives seeking higher values, not only pursuing academic studies, but also by looking deeply within ourselves and understanding the linkage among people, society, and nature. I would like you to endeavor to understand and appreciate of this spirit of Jesuit education.

Have you heard of Mother Teresa of Calcutta? We had the privilege of receiving her at our campus before she passed away. At an international conference in the 1980s, Mother Teresa told the following story.

“One evening, a gentleman came to our home and said that a Hindu family with eight children had not eaten for a long time. He asked us to do something for them.

I went out immediately with the food. There I found a mother with her hungry children. She took

the food from me, divided it into two portions and left the house immediately. When she returned, I asked her where she had been. She said that she had known that the Muslim family living next door was hungry and gave half of the food she had received to them.”

Mother Teresa then said,

“What surprised me was not that she shared the food. What surprised me was that she was aware of the suffering of her neighbor amid her own hunger.”

Mother Teresa's experience may be an extreme example, but it reminds us that even in our weaknesses and insufficiencies, we have the capacity to perceive the feelings of others and to have compassion for them. Understanding the educational philosophy of Sophia University means enhancing these abilities that we possess as human beings and using them to face the challenges of humanity and society.

In this sense, the education offered at Sophia University requires you to pursue the four C's. Firstly, make yourself “Competent”. This refers to the academic side of education, which leads to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities. Competent students can interact with reality, ask questions, and understand and solve problems. Secondly, become a person with a good “Conscience”. This means recognizing one's own responsibilities and acting accordingly; and therefore, becoming someone who upholds these values in both their studies and their social roles. Thirdly, be “Compassionate”, and empathize with others and work for justice. Finally, be “Committed”, and be prepared to face the challenges accompanying human relationships and social issues. I hope that you will all aim to become people with the four C's. The four C's will liberate you and enable you to take care of your family and loved ones and help those in need in society.

Pope Francis has designated 2025 as a year marked with “special opportunities to seek forgiveness and reconciliation”. It is also the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and His Holiness has proclaimed 2025 a Jubilee Year with the theme of Pilgrims of Hope in the face of difficult situations such as conflicts and wars, human rights violations, and environmental problems occurring around the world. I would like you all to become pilgrims of hope and solidarity. I sincerely hope that your studies will empower you and enrich your own lives, and that you will become people who serve others and contribute to a peaceful society.

I would like to conclude my congratulatory address by wishing you a fruitful and invaluable time in your university and graduate school life.

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Sali Augustine

Chancellor of Sophia School Corporation