

2025 Autumn entrance message from Chancellor. Sali Augustine
Be a beacon of peace and hope!

Let me offer my congratulations to every one of you on your successful entrance into Sophia University and its graduate programs. Let me also share my joy with your parents, guarantors, and all others who have been supporting you in different ways until this moment.

It is with great pride and joy that I welcome you to the Sophia family. Let me remind you that you are entering Sophia University in the special year of 2025. For Japan, this is the 80th year of the devastating atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and this year marks 80 years since the end of World War II. Coincidentally, the Catholic Church has declared this year a Year of HOPE as its Jubilee year 2025. Therefore, my wish and message to you, is a reflection based on these points.

My conscious engagement with Japan's history began in 1992, when one of my professors Father Chinnadurai, an old Jesuit priest, and a well-known scientist, often referred to as a living encyclopedia, taught me in detail about World War II and its aftermath, as well as the scientific details of the atom bomb explosion. I vividly remember the moment he described the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and its devastating consequences on people—tears welled in his eyes as he spoke. I was deeply moved and listened intently. This made a significant impact personally on me. Coincidentally, my arrival in Japan in 1997 was on August 9, the day of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki.

Hence, I believe, Japan and those who engage their academic life in Japan, bear a responsibility. Whatever your academic discipline may be, all of us who live today, benefiting from the 80 years of postwar peace, bear a profound responsibility: to ensure that such a terrible war is never repeated.

First, for many people, the reality of that time, of 80 years ago, may no longer be a lived memory. Those who experienced the war firsthand are passing away, and opportunities to hear their stories directly are diminishing. The fading of war memories and the weakening of our collective resolve to reject war are only occasionally noted in the media. Still, across Japan—in Okinawa, Hiroshima, Nagasaki—prayers continue to be offered in remembrance of the victims and the tragedies of 80 years ago. Moreover, the deep wounds inflicted by Japan upon its neighboring Asian countries continue to cause pain and sorrow for many. We must reflect on this with sincerity and gravity.

Secondly, it is because we need to be conscious of our university's foundational principle `Sophia Bringing the World Together`, which means we are committed to create a world together in peace, hope, solidarity and reconciliation along with the educational spirit, `For Others, With Others`.

Today, the world unfolding before us, regrettably, cannot be described as peaceful. Wars persist without end, and countless lives are lost each day—often senselessly. We cannot

remain indifferent to this reality. We must be beacons of Hope and Reconciliation. Apart from forming people in our educational spirit, in response to this ongoing global situation, Sophia School Corporation engages in various initiatives, like recently we have joined the Catholic university initiative, “Partnership for the World Without nuclear weapons”. Furthermore, Sophia University has declared, in accordance with the statement issued by the Science Council of Japan, that it will not conduct research for military security or dual-use (civilian and military) purposes. In this context, let me recollect late Pope Francis’ visit to Sophia University in 2019 and delivered a powerful message to all of us:

“No student of your university should graduate without having learned how to choose, responsibly and freely, what he or she knows in conscience is best. In every situation, even the most complex, may they be concerned that their conduct is just and humane, conscientious and responsible, and show themselves resolute defenders of the vulnerable.”

I urge you to embrace the spirit of Sophia University, being capable, competent and compassionate persons “For Others” while being with them. We are encouraged by the words of Jesus telling his followers (Matthew (5:9), “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Once again, my warmest congratulations to all of you joining Sophia University today. Let me pray for God’s blessing on each one of you that you may be enlightened and lead by the real Wisdom. Do embrace this opportunity with open hearts and minds, engage in dialogue with peers from diverse backgrounds, and reflect deeply on what you can do, in shaping a more just and peaceful world.

Thank you

September 21, 2025
Augustine Sali, SJ
Chancellor, Sophia School Corporation