

Rector Major
Homily for the Inauguration of the Academic Year 2015-2016
Salesian Pontifical University - UPS, Rome
21/10/2015

Dear brothers and sisters, members of the University,
dear friends of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See,
and all present:

today gives us yet another good opportunity to invoke together the gift of the Holy Spirit in our institutional, academic and personal life. The gift of the Spirit, from the first day of Pentecost onwards, is a gift that is asked for together, as a faith community, with hearts full of the presence of the Risen Christ and in communion with Mary, the Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church.

In the first reading we heard how Paul tries to make the community of Corinth grasp the new Christian understanding of the gifts that God offers, in the Spirit. The Apostle lists opposites that converge, because diversity becomes unity in God:

- Diversity of **gifts**, but one **Spirit**;
- Diversity of **ministries**, but one **Lord**;
- Diversity of **work**, but the same **God** which works in all. ¹

The human being bears this diversity in himself or herself because it is a reflection of the diversity of God, and God always manifests his essential unity, a unity that brings together human diversity in horizontal and vertical communion, diversity which opens us to an understanding and an experience of unity in God - One Spirit, one Lord, one God who is working in all.

A year ago, at the beginning of the academic year I chose to emphasize this dynamic of diversity and convergence in God. I said: "... the presence of the Spirit always ensures that a multiculturalism in fact, like ours here at the UPS, will become truly intercultural and will allow us to have a thorough and respectful experience of internationality [...]. Diversity is not an obstacle but a valued thread in the web we weave together." Not long ago, a confrere sent me a text of John Henry Newman who liked to call the university "the seat of universal knowledge". One place, but a network of knowledge and science which shows in diversity. In his fifth academic discourse Newman says, the University is "An aggregation of educated people, zealous in pursuing their sciences, and rivals of each other. Through familiar relationships and an interest in intellectual peace they are led to adapt the rights and relationships of their respective

¹ 1Cor 12,3-7.12-13; Ps 103; Jn 7,37-39

objects of investigation. They learn to respect each other, to consult, to help one another. This creates an air of thought that is pure and clear, that the student can breathe."

Who can guarantee this "air of thought, pure and clear"? Only God, one Spirit and one Lord, who gives unity to charisms, ministries and works. As Paul says, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good ..." (v. 7)

This unity in diversity does not obscure the whole. The diversity and autonomy of the individual and of the different units, such as the different institutes and faculties, give meaning, body and belonging to everyone and everything. So it is not a question of autonomy as an end, but autonomy as a necessary means to reach the combined corpus of knowledge and communion. Your intellectual mission needs "autonomy as a means" that can be woven, patiently and together, to give shape to our university, and then as a university, to be available to the common fabric of the Congregation, the Church, civil society and cultures of which it is the servant. So your aim is to reach the goals of the University as "the seat of universal knowledge." Only in this way can our university community share the universal mission of the Church, which, as the mystical body of the Lord Jesus, helps humanity to come to him and drink, as a sharer with the Lord, from the springs of living water.

Finally, I invite you, as Fr Egidio Viganò did in his homily for the inauguration of the new academic year of 1984, "to consider and cultivate, in your university work, the advantage of being believers. My wish for you is that you become deeper believers every day. In this way the Spirit will make you:

- **Humble**, in responding sincerely to the real needs in the restricted area of each of the disciplines; and a proud university, aware, even if unconsciously, of the objectivity and limitations of its knowledge.
- **Dialoguing** in the search for a continuous exchange with other disciplines [and with other specialist universities]. A student locked up in their own specialization loses the sense of the whole, and deprives the University of the valid contributions of their research.
- **Wise**, channelling the achievements of science to the kind of superior and encompassing knowledge which is called wisdom.
- **Spiritual**, (...) as intelligent children of the Father who find in knowledge a starting point for prayer, a foretaste of contemplation, and an invitation to converse with God.

Yes, may the Holy Spirit make of this university a large community of scholarly believers capable of celebrating every day **a special liturgy of intelligence**.².

I am very happy to reiterate these beautiful and clear words of Fr Viganò while we entrust ourselves to Mary, Seat of Wisdom and Help of the People of God.

² Egidio Viganò, "Homily for the inauguration of the new academic year 1984", in Egidio Viganò all'università salesiana, UPS Roma 1996, pp. 119- 120.

May she accompany you in your work of study, research, intellectual sharing and daily effort in the search for the Truth, Beauty and Goodness of this world, damaged by the lack of brotherhood among peoples and individuals. May she, the Mother of the Church, help us to obtain the precious gifts of the Spirit to be ever more humble, dialoguing, wise and spiritual.