

**REMARKS OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AVEPRO REGIONAL SEMINAR ON QUALITY IN ECCLESIASTICAL INSTITUTIONS
OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
WASHINGTON, D.C. – MAY 14, 2024**

Dear Friends,

I offer my welcome to representatives of the academic institutions, to those who have joined us from the Dicastery for Culture and Education, and to AVEPRO, which has initiated this program of regional seminars throughout the world. In representing the Holy Father to the United States, allow me to convey to everyone the spiritual closeness of Pope Francis, as well as his encouragement in your work to foster high-quality education in ecclesiastical institutions and faculties.

This seminar for North America will be followed later this year by seminars in Latin America and Africa; and in 2025, by meetings in Asia, Oceania, and Europe. This reminds us that, as the Church proclaims a Gospel whose saving power extends to the entire world, so her educational institutions have a global reach. And these institutions are not limited in their scope to academics; but more broadly, they shape cultures and have a broad social impact. As Pope Francis expressed in the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*:

“In all countries, universities constitute the main centers of scientific research for the advancement of knowledge and of society; they play a decisive role in economic social and cultural development, especially in a time like our own, marked as it is by rapid, constant and far-reaching changes in the fields of science and technology” (n. 5).

This means that our institutions occupy a place of both great privilege and deep responsibility in helping to form a more just and fraternal world. For that reason, it is important to examine our institutions as to their ability to read the signs of the times, to speak the truth as it relates to the global challenges of today, and to contribute to a culture of peace.

As Pope Francis expressed in the Foreword to *Veritatis Gaudium*, the work of ecclesiastical studies is not separate from the mission of evangelization which must be at the center of the Church's life. In fact, our academic institutions "are called to be a sort of providential cultural laboratory in which the Church carries out the performative interpretation of the reality brought about by the Christ event" and by the wisdom and knowledge that the Holy Spirit has given to the different members of the Church. "This is essential," the Pope says, "for a Church that 'goes forth'", especially "because we are not only living in a time of changes but are experiencing a true epochal shift" (n. 3).

As we explore the work of our ecclesiastical institutions of higher education, let's keep in mind the first two criteria which *Veritatis Gaudium* offered as "fundamental...for a renewal and revival of the contribution of ecclesiastical studies to a Church of missionary outreach". First, that we are always introducing students "to the heart of the kerygma, namely the ever fresh and attractive good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ". And second, that we are making dialogue an intrinsic part of our educational method, so that we promote that "culture of encounter" by which people can experience communion with the One who is both the Truth and the Life (*cf.* n. 4).

The proclamation of the kerygma, and dialogue as a way to encounter Christ in Himself and in each other. May these criteria help guide our institutions. But may these criteria also be animating principles for this seminar and for our time together.