



PONTIFICIA
UNIVERSITÀ
GREGORIANA

Press and Communication Office

*Mass in Memory
of Holy Father Francis*

Homily by Rev. Fr. Sunny Kokkaravalayil, S.J.
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*Quadrifortico of the Central Palazzo
Rome – Monday, April 28, 2025*

Liturgy of the Word:
1 John 3:14-16; Luke 24:13-35

Dear brothers and sisters,

In recent days, the media has been talking a lot about Pope Francis—in particular, about some of his speeches that have stood out for their depth, helping many of us to better understand the vision that has guided his pontificate.

We are here to pray for Pope Francis and to thank the Lord for the gift he has been to the Church and the world. On this occasion, we want to show deep appreciation, first and foremost, for his unwavering fidelity to the Lord and the Gospel—a fidelity that has taken shape in a multitude of ways:

- in his commitment to deepen people's faith and make our faith more accessible to all;
- in fostering an evangelization that is both attentive and merciful;
- in his tireless dedication to peace;
- in seeking unity among Christians;
- in his concern for taking care of all creation;
- in his work of reconciliation and in human and interreligious dialogue;
- in his genuine closeness to the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, and the marginalized;
- in his constant fight against evil of every kind;
- and in so many other ways in which he promoted human dignity.

For him, the basis of all these commitments was the Gospel, lived with consistency and passion. We can be sure that his ministry has strengthened, in the hearts of many, trust in the Church.

However, I would like to focus on an aspect that hits home: The special attention Pope Francis gave to our university. He strongly supported the integration that took place last May. Moreover, he granted us two audiences: The first in April 2014, and the most recent, on November 5, 2024, in this very place.

In 2014, he called on our institutions, which formed a Consortium at the time, to develop “collaboration and synergy, cherishing the historical memory and, at the same time, embracing the present and looking to the future [...] seeking to form a global vision of present situations and challenges and a shared manner of confronting them, finding new ways without fear.”¹

At the last meeting on November 5, he delivered a message of rare intensity. He invited us to renew our educational and spiritual mission by calling on us, once again, to confront the challenges of our time. He drew clear, bold guidelines. Education, he said, is not the privilege of a few, but a right for all. Theology must not be an abstract exercise, but should be based in actual contact with reality, with people, with cultural symbols—an approach to theology capable of igniting hope. He warned us against superficial knowledge that lacks real roots. He called on us to recall the depth of our purpose and to not lose sight of the essential.

In short, he left us with one specific direction: To build an inclusive educational system, fully embodied and capable of awakening hope in an often-disoriented world.

In light of this teaching, let us be guided by the message of today's readings. The first reading reminds us that only love for our neighbor enables us to move from death to life. The Gospel then offers us a living echo of the pope's invitation.

The Risen Christ becomes a companion to the disciples on their way to Emmaus. He listens to them, instructs them, and awakens them. Thanks to this educational accompaniment, their hearts beat fully again. Thus, is born in them the desire to return to Jerusalem, to their community, and to their mission. Education, in this passage from the Gospel, is presented as a transformative experience. Knowledge, illuminated by faith, generates courage, discernment, and decisiveness.

As the academic community of the Gregorian, today, we ask the Lord for the light and courage to faithfully follow the path He shows us and to transform this “academic space of ours into a house of the heart,”² as Pope Francis has ardently invited us to do.

We ask for the intercession of Pope Francis, so that we can be credible witnesses of that hope that he himself sought to keep lit in the heart of the world.

¹ FRANCIS, *Address to the Community of the Pontifical Gregorian University, Together with Members of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Oriental Institute*, April 10, 2014.

² FRANCIS, *Meeting with the Academic Community of the Pontifical Gregorian University*, November 5, 2024.