



‘A SIGN OF THE GOSPEL AND WORKSHOPS OF HOPE’

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Even today, in an age in which culture is accessible to all and more readily explored than ever with the aid of artificial intelligence, the term “theology” still tends, in the public imagination, to evoke a discipline reserved for a select few—studied exclusively by candidates for the priesthood and taught by elderly ecclesiastics endowed with encyclopaedic memories. Recently, Pope Leo XIV has sought to restore to theology the image and role that properly belong to it in the present historical context. On 2 March, in the *Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace*, I had the opportunity to attend an audience granted by the Holy Father to the communities of the Puglia Theological Faculty and the Theological Institute of Calabria, together with the bishops and the major superiors of the Orders and Religious Congregations of the two regions. In his address, Pope Prevost highlighted “an important point” that he wished “to reaffirm”: “Theology serves the proclamation of the Gospel and is therefore an integral and essential part of the Church’s mission. Theological formation

is not the preserve of a few specialists, but a calling addressed to all, so that each person may deepen the mystery of faith and receive the tools needed to carry forward, with passion, the Church’s enduring commitment to the cultural and social mediation of the Gospel.’ This message, heard by those present, deserves the widest possible circulation once its authentic meaning has been properly grasped. The Holy Father is not suggesting that every believer should pursue an academic qualification in theology; rather, he calls for the knowledge acquired within universities to be shared and diffused ‘through encounter and exchange, through mutual listening and dialogue, within that communion among the Churches which connects resources, skills and charisms.’ He desires that knowledge of God should not remain confined to “future priests”, but should also extend to other “pastoral workers”—that is, catechists and those who collaborate with priests in service at the altar.

For this reason, addressing all those present—including lecturers and supporters of the two institutions—Pope Leo XIV invited them ‘to dream of an academic community in

which candidates for ordained ministry, consecrated men and women, and lay men and women are formed together, helping Christian communities to become a sign of the Gospel and workshops of hope’, and ‘to inhabit the world with both fidelity and creativity, tradition and newness, unity and diversity, always attentive to what, even today, the Spirit of the Lord is saying to the Church’.

A deeper knowledge of God—of His love and of the saving grace that has flowed to all humanity from the Passion, Death and Resurrection of His only-begotten Son—may help us to live out our adherence to the Gospel more authentically. In this way, we may be better able to offer, within the contexts in which we live, a witness of faith, hope and charity: through words that instruct and guide, but above all through an example that persuades and gives credibility. May Mary, who first welcomed and safeguarded the Word, making it flesh, accompany us on our journey, so that, formed in the school of the Gospel, we may become a living and active sign of hope. ▼

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