

*(original text in Italian)*

Secretariat of State

To His Eminence

Cardinal Giuseppe Betori

Archbishop of Florence

Chancellor of the Sophia University Institute

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On the occasion of the inauguration of the International Patriarch Athenagoras - Chiara Lubich Chair of Ecumenical Studies, I assure you of my spiritual presence and offer my cordial greetings to all present especially His Eminence Gennadios Zervos, Metropolitan of the Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Malta, who has been entrusted with the inaugural address.

I rejoice at this praiseworthy initiative commemorating the meeting between the Ecumenical Patriarch and the founder of the Focolare Movement fifty years ago. This marked the start of a fruitful journey of mutual understanding and collaboration, which has brought many benefits including dialogue and fraternal friendship.

My wish is that the “Sophia “University Institute, in following its own charism and being open to the Holy Spirit, may continue to be a place of encounter and dialogue amongst different cultures and religions. I assure you of my prayers and as I ask you to pray for me, I impart my blessing to all those present.

Francis PP

Given at the Vatican, 12 December 2017