

THE UNIVERSITY AS A PROJECT OF HOPE

Holy Father,

Welcome! Gathered on this campus of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa are students, professors, collaborators, *alumni* and friends of our university and other Portuguese and international universities who, as pilgrims, with open hearts, welcome you.

The Universidade Católica Portuguesa, born 56 years ago from the Faculty of Philosophy founded by the Society of Jesus, today has 17 Faculties and 4 *campi* distributed throughout the national territory (Lisbon, Porto, Braga and Viseu), having also founded the current University of Saint Joseph, in Macau. We have 20,000 students, 25% of whom are international, coming from 108 different countries, and more than 2,000 teachers and collaborators. We are an outgoing university, with a strong social sense and awarding scholarships and prizes to more than 20% of our students. We are particularly proud of our work with young people in social and economic fragility, migrants and refugees, supported under the Pope Francis Fund.

The university is, by definition, a place of search, dialogue and welcome. In the face of realities marked by exclusion and inequality, in a time of uncertainty, **the university stands as a guardian of hope**, which means promoting the capacity to dream, helping to discern, listening to the voices around us, listening to the time and intervening in it, defending the dignity of women and men and believing in their capacity for transformation. In our work, we combine the search for knowledge in favour of improving the human condition, ethical discernment that guides the possibility of choosing and acting, the cultivation of beauty and aesthetic gesture that is also a search for meaning in the world. **The university is therefore a curator of knowledge, a philosopher of action and a manager of beauty.**

The Holy Father, in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, invites us "to think of one world with a common project" (*Laudato si'*, 164) and to welcome the world as a "sacrament of communion" (*Laudato si'*, 9). Science and research require mutual recognition and the ability to transform and transcend, in a community and collaborative engagement. Our proposal is rich in values because it stems from a specific Christian humanist vision of existence. But to honour this tradition, we must constantly challenge ourselves. The university does not exist to preserve itself as an institution, but to respond with courage to the challenges of the present and the future. And so it will always be a project, never a finished work.

The launch of the new *Campus Veritati* of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, whose first stone His Holiness will bless, extends the welcoming space of our campus, open to the world, to listening and to hope. At this significant moment, we also dedicate to you a gesture of beauty with the gift of the sculpture 'Lady with a book', by the sculptor Manuel Rosa, and we offer you knowledge by announcing the creation of the new Chair "Economy of Francesco and Clare", dedicated to hosting transversal initiatives in all areas of knowledge of the UCP, aimed at promoting the principles of the Economy of Francesco and developing a social model that dignifies people and the environment.

Pope Francis, thank you for the generosity with which you inspire us in our mission. We pray for you. And thank you for your fraternal affection for the protagonists of the future, the young people who are gathering these days in Lisbon and whose voices we will now hear.

Isabel Capeloa Gil

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[Isabel Capeloa Gil: "The university as a project of hope" | UCP](#)