



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE RECTORS AND PROFESSORS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
AND THE PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY**

Friday, 12 May 1989

Distinguished Rectors and Professors,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today for this cordial exchange of greetings. Your coming together in Rome can be seen as a further sign of the fruitfulness of the Agreement for Academic Cooperation existing between the University of Ankara and the Pontifical Gregorian University. I am happy to learn that this Agreement has been renewed during the course of your meeting.

Cooperation between the two universities has up till now taken the form of reciprocal visits and the exchange of professors. In this way you have sought to promote mutual knowledge and understanding. I am happy to know that the present seminar, organized by the two universities and with the support of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, has given an extra stimulus to collaboration between you.

The theme you have chosen for your discussions, *Collaboration in Theological Education: Communicating Religious Values to Youth Today*, is one of considerable importance. Some people in today's world may tend to attach less importance to theology and religious education, as compared to the burning questions of justice, peace, development, respect for nature, and scientific research. But precisely with regard to these questions there is need for a reflection on the underlying truths and values. Of basic importance among them are the dignity of the human person and the fundamental equality of all human beings, which we, as Christians and Muslims, see grounded in the relationship between the human person and God. As I said to young Muslims in Casablanca on 19th August 1985: "Important as the economic problems may be, man does not

live on bread alone; he needs an intellectual and spiritual life; it is there that he finds the soul of this world” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio Albae domi, in Marochio, ad iuvenes muslimos, 9, die 19 aug. 1985: Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, VIII, 2* (1985) 504s).

The present social, economic and political situation calls for an increased awareness of the spiritual dimension of life, a dimension which transcends national boundaries and ethnic and cultural differences. If man is to discover himself and the “inner person” in the midst of so many changes, it is imperative that he should develop his spirit and his conscience in the service of goodness and truth. This is the first step in resolving the crisis of identity which is so prevalent in the world we share.

Twenty-four years ago the Second Vatican Council, in its Declaration “*Nostra Aetate*”, made an appeal for cooperation between Christians and Muslims. Your seminar is an expression of the spirit of the Council. May I express the hope that it may indeed be an encouragement to a “renewed effort of research and investigation”, conducted together for the benefit of your own students and for the whole of society. Such cooperation can only be genuinely effective where social and political conditions respect the freedom of conscience which is the right of every person, and where the freedom of religion is guaranteed in law and in practice. An important part of your dialogue therefore will be to seek ways of promoting these fundamental and legitimate aspirations. With this in mind I invoke upon you and your colleagues in the different universities you represent the blessings of God Almighty. All-Wise and All-Merciful.

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