



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ADMINISTRATORS, FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS
OF THE PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY OF THE HOLY CROSS**

Saturday, 29 May 1999

Distinguished Academic Authorities and Teachers,

Dear Technical and Administrative Staff,

Dear Students,

1. I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Athenaeum of the Holy Cross, which received the title of Pontifical University last 15 July. Thank you for your visit! I cordially greet each of you, dear professors, young university students and administrative and technical staff. In particular I thank the Grand Chancellor, Archbishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, for his kind words on everyone's behalf.

The purpose of your university, born of the apostolic zeal of Bl. Josemaría Escrivá, is to seek and promote the truth with intellectual honesty and respect for Revelation. As such, it knows it is at the service of the Church, called in our time to a more courageous missionary effort in view of the third millennium.

2. I note with appreciation that in response to a particular need of the contemporary world, that of using one's professional competence and ecclesial sense to bring the world of public opinion and the modern mass media to an ever better understanding of the riches that flow from the Church's life, your university has planned for a Faculty of Institutional Social Communications with the task of providing specific training for people who will be able to collaborate with the Bishops, the Episcopal Conferences and other ecclesial institutions in transmitting correct information about the Church through the media of social communication. This initiative takes into account the current needs of communications. I ardently hope that your efforts will encourage the spread and inculturation of the Gospel, the Good News of authentic liberation, at every level of social and civil life.

I would also like to recall that the Higher Institute of Religious Studies at the Apollinare, created years ago with great foresight by Cardinal Pietro Palazzini, has become part of your university. With its special extension courses, your structure offers the opportunity for academic and ecclesial formation to those who are responsible for teaching religion in schools, for catechesis in parishes and for other forms of apostolate.

3. Your university's coat of arms uses a design of Bl. Josemaría Escrivá and recalls the meaning of your work. Its central element is a Greek cross whose arms end in arrowheads. It looks as if the Cross is extended in every direction, reaching out to embrace humanity and the whole universe. Next to the Cross we read the words *Iesus Christus, Deus Homo*. What a meaningful synthesis of the orientation of your teaching and research! The Cross is the supreme revelation of the mystery of the incarnate Word, *perfectus Deus, perfectus homo* (cf. Creed *Quicumque*). In his ineffable love, the crucified Christ reveals in a striking way the Father's infinite mercy for human beings in all ages.

The wisdom of the Cross is a light that illumines the meaning of human life. St Augustine rightly speaks of the Cross as the chair of the divine Teacher: "*Lignum illud ubi erant fixa membra morientis, etiam cathedra fuit magistri docentis*" (*In Ioann. Ev.* 119, 2: CCL 36, 658). It is from this chair that we receive the sublime lesson of God's love for us. The limits of knowledge are paradoxically overcome by faith in the God-Man nailed to the Cross and raised by the Father. It is our duty not to forsake this chair. Only in this way will we find, as Bl. Josemaría Escrivá loved to repeat, "*Lux in Cruce, gaudium in Cruce, requies in Cruce*": the light, joy and peace which flow from the plan of salvation. Only by letting itself be immersed by the Holy Spirit in Christ's mystery, will theological thought be enlightened with wisdom and fully understand the meaning of the Cross, the path of human salvation, of the purification of heart and mind.

4. In these times when we are witnessing the fragmentation of knowledge and widespread distrust in reason's capacity for attaining truth, I thought it appropriate to publish the recent Encyclical *Fides et ratio*, a text to be studied particularly by those who work on faculties of the ecclesiastical disciplines. Like *Veritatis splendor*, with which it is logically connected, it offers fertile guidance for the work of those who are dedicated to the study of theology, the sacred sciences and philosophy. It is in Christ, God and Man, that the perfect harmony between nature and grace shines brightly. This marvellous balance has borne countless fruits of knowledge down the ages. The various branches of knowledge still need the light of theology, accompanied by a sapiential philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range.

Contemplation of the union of the human and the divine in Christ, particularly in the crucified Christ, will not fail to help you integrate the various fields of knowledge, to foster interdisciplinary study and to open you to the whole truth. In this task you will also find sound guidance in St Thomas Aquinas, in whose thinking "the demands of reason and the power of faith found the most elevated synthesis ever attained by human thought, for he could defend the radical newness

introduced by Revelation without ever demeaning the venture proper to reason" (*Fides et ratio*, n. 78).

5. Dear friends, I encourage you to pursue the commitment you have made to deepening your knowledge of doctrine, a commitment enlivened by a constant yearning for holiness. May everyone who attends your university be helped to meet the challenges posed to faith by today's culture and society; may they be helped to be apostles of the new evangelization, docile to the Holy Spirit and faithful to the Church's Magisterium.

May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, protect you always and be the safe haven of all who devote their lives to the search for truth.

With these sentiments, I bless you wholeheartedly.

At the end of his address the Holy Father added extemporaneously:

Today, on the eve of the Holy Trinity, let us adore this mystery of our faith