



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

TO A DELEGATION FROM THE POLISH UNIVERSITY OF OPOLE *Tuesday, 17 February 2004*

*Your Excellency,
Rector Magnificent,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am most grateful to you for your kindness in paying me a visit at the Vatican and in conferring upon me the title of Doctor *honoris causa* of your University. This act has a special eloquence for me, given that it coincides with the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Opole. It is now almost 10 years since the historic unification of the School for Advanced Pedagogical Studies in Education and the Institute of Pastoral Theology, which started the University of Opole.

When I consented to the establishment of that Faculty and its incorporation into the structures of a State University, I was aware that the creation of that Athenaeum was very important for the Opole region. I am pleased that during this decade the University has been developing and is becoming a dynamic research centre where thousands of young people can acquire knowledge and wisdom.

I thank God for the fact that the University, as the Archbishop said, cooperates with the Church in the work of social integration in the Opole area. I know that she is doing so in her own way. If the Church encourages processes of unification based on the common faith, the common spiritual and moral values, on the hope and love that are able to forgive, the University, for its part, has its own especially valuable means for this purpose; although they stem from the same root they have a different character - one might even say, a more universal character. Since these means are based on the deepening of the cultural heritage and the treasure of national and universal knowledge, as well as on the development of the various branches of science, they are accessible not only to those who share the same faith but also to those with other convictions. This is important. Indeed, if we speak of social integration, we cannot by this mean cancelling differences, unifying the way of thinking or forgetting history, often marked by events that created divisions. By social integration we mean a persevering search for those values common to human beings who have different backgrounds, a different history and consequently, their own view of the world and

specific references to the society in which they happen to live.

The University, by creating possibilities for the development of the humanities, can help in a purification of memory that does not forget wrongs and sins but makes it possible to forgive and to seek forgiveness, and subsequently, to open minds and hearts to truth, goodness and beauty, values that constitute the common treasure and should be harmoniously cultivated and developed. The different branches of knowledge can also promote unification. It even seems that thanks to the fact they are free from philosophical and especially ideological premises, they can approach this task more directly. Yes, they may demonstrate differences with reference to the ethical assessment of research, and we cannot disregard them. However, if researchers recognize the principles of truth and the common good, they will not refuse to collaborate in order to learn about the world on the basis of the same sources, similar methods and a common goal: dominion over the earth in accordance with the Creator's recommendation (cf. Gn 1: 28).

Today much is said about Europe's Christian roots. If cathedrals, artwork, music and literature are signs of them, in a certain sense they are eloquent in silence. Universities, on the other hand, can speak about them aloud. They can speak in the language of today, comprehensible to everyone.

Yes, their voices might not be heard by those who are deafened by the ideology of the secularization of our Continent, but this does not dispense academics, faithful to historical truth, from the task of bearing witness through a sound examination of the secrets of knowledge and wisdom that have flourished in the fertile soil of Christianity.

Ut ager quamvis fertilis sine cultura fructuosus esse non potest, sic sine doctrina animus (Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, II, 4). Just as a field, even if it is fertile, cannot bear fruit without cultivation, so also a spirit without culture. I quote Cicero's words to express my gratitude for that "cultivation of the spirit" which the University of Opole has been implementing for 10 years.

I hope that this great work may be carried on for the good of the Opole region, Poland and Europe. May the collaboration of all the faculties of your Athenaeum, including the Faculty of Theology, serve all who desire to develop their humanity on the basis of the most noble spiritual values.

I bless everyone present from the heart for this endeavour, all the professors and students of the University of Opole, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.