



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ROME UNIVERSITY THREE AT TOR VERGATA
FOR THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE 10th ACADEMIC YEAR

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Thursday, 31 January 2002

*Dear Rector,
Distinguished Guests and Lecturers,
Dear Students,*

1. It gives me great joy to visit your university community, for the Solemn Inauguration of the Tenth Academic Year. First of all, I want to greet the rector, Prof. Guido Fabiani, whom I thank for his invitation and words of welcome. I listened attentively as he described the plans of the Athenaeum and I deeply appreciate the openness that distinguishes your academic centre, as well as your desire to cooperate in a special way with Third World countries by making five scholarships available to young people from those countries.

I greet the heads of the various faculties, together with the institutional and academic authorities whose presence enhances this meeting. I also greet respectfully Mrs Letizia Moratti, Minister of Education, Universities and Research, who has honoured us with her presence.

I cordially greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar of Rome, the Auxiliary Bishop of the Sector and the priests in charge of the spiritual formation of those who attend this university centre, to which the Church of Rome looks with sympathy and attention. She is ready to cooperate, so that, together, she may offer to the University community a competent service with the goal of creating in the diversity of roles, occasions for dialogue, discussion and proposals. I am sure that this communion of minds will increase, supported by the constant activity of the university's chaplaincy.

Above all, I greet you, dear students, who are being prepared to collaborate in building the society

of the future. In a particular way I greet your representative and thank him for his thoughtful words expressing your common sentiments. Your future will depend largely on the conscientious way you apply yourselves in these years to the many disciplines, that are useful tools in the daily quest for the truth about yourselves and the world in which you live.

2. To prepare yourselves for this meeting, you reflected on the contribution that, as undergraduates, you are called to make to the common good, and you concluded that your first duty is to be faithful to the typical mission of a university centre. The essential mission of universities is to be an authoritative guide in the quest for truth: from the simplest truths, such as those about material elements and living beings, to the more complicated truths such as those on the laws of knowledge, of social living, of the use of the science; lastly, of deeper truths, such as the meaning of human action and the values that inspire individual and community activity.

Humanity needs authoritative guides of truth, and, if the university is a workshop of knowledge, those who are engaged in it need to have as the true compass of their activity the intellectual honesty, that makes it possible to sift the false from the true, the part from the whole, the means from the end. This is already a significant contribution to building a future anchored in the sound and universal values of freedom, justice and peace.

3. St Thomas Aquinas, whose feast we celebrated last Monday [28 January], observed that the "*genus humanum arte et ratione vivit*" [the human race lives by skill and reason] (in *Arist. Post. Analyt.*, 1). Every immediate and scientific knowledge should be referred to the values and traditions that constitute the treasure of a people. Drawing from those values that bind together and, at the same time, distinguish one people from another, the university becomes the magisterial centre of a culture that is truly human and is the ideal environment to harmonize the individual genius of a nation and the spiritual values that belong to the whole human family.

You, my dear Rector, have just recalled what I asserted a few years ago: that man lives a truly human life thanks to culture. Culture and cultures must not be opposed to one another, but rather maintain a dialogue that enriches the unity and diversity of human existence. We are then in the presence of a fruitful plurality that allows the person to develop without losing his own roots, because it helps to preserve the fundamental dimension of his integral being.

The person is a spiritual and material subjectivity, capable of spiritualizing the material, and making it a docile instrument of his/her own spiritual energies, that is, of his intelligence and will. At the same time his spiritual subjectivity is able to give a material dimension to the spirit, in other words, to make the spiritual incarnate and historical. Think, for example, of all the great intellectual, artistic, and technical intuitions that have become "matter", that is, concrete and practical expressions of genius that were first conceived in the mind itself.

4. In every field, the journey of knowledge cannot do without a loyal evaluation using the ethical

and moral values connected with the spiritual dimension of the human person. Faith enlightens the set of values innate in the human heart that are a fundamental point of reference. It is enough to look at history with objectivity to realize how important religion has been in the formation of cultures, and how with its influence it has shaped the entire human *habitat*. To ignore or deny this is not only an error of perspective, but also a disservice to the truth about the human person. Why be afraid to open knowledge and culture to faith? The passion and rigour of the quest have nothing to lose in the sapiential dialogue with the values contained in religion. Did not this osmosis produce the humanism of which our Europe is justifiably proud, as today it reaches toward new cultural and economic triumphs?

Insofar as it depends on the Church, as the Second Vatican Council recalls, "our eagerness for such dialogue, conducted with appropriate discretion and leading to truth by way of love alone, excludes nobody; we would like to include those who respect outstanding human values without realizing who the author of those values is, as well as those who persecute the Church" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 92).

The [Assisi meeting](#) last Thursday showed how the authentic religious spirit promotes a sincere dialogue that opens souls to reciprocal understanding and agreement serving the cause of the human person.

5. Distinguished academic authorities, dear professors and students, I entrust these reflections to you who form the great family of the Third University of Rome. May your work be supported by a passionate dedication, carried out with constancy and generosity, and be inspired by a spirit of understanding and dialogue. The renewal of our society and the building of a better future of peace for everyone depends on you who are occupied in the sector of scientific research.

May Mary, Mother of Wisdom, support you in your passion for the truth and enlighten you in times of difficulty and trial. Never lose heart! The Pope is beside you and blesses you warmly, together with your loved ones.