



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE RECTORS AND PROFESSORS
FROM THE UNIVERSITIES AND ACADEMIES
OF WROCLAW AND OPOLE (POLAND)**

Thursday, 8 January 2004

*Your esteemed Eminence,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I cordially welcome you all. I am pleased to receive such illustrious representatives of the academic fields of Wrocław and Opole, and I thank you for coming and for your kindness.

I gratefully accept the gift that your Universities have wished to present to me; I welcome it not only as an expression of gratitude but especially as an eloquent sign of the bond which grows ever stronger between the Church and the world of science in Poland. It seems, thanks be to God, that we have left behind that period which, for ideological reasons, attempted to divide - or rather, to put in opposition - these two sources of the spiritual growth of the person and of society. I personally experienced this in a particular way. If today we are commemorating the 50th anniversary of my dissertation to qualify for university professorship, it must not be forgotten that this qualification was the last one obtained in the Faculty of Theology at the Jagiellonian University.

A short time later, it was suppressed by the Communist authorities. This act was aimed at dividing the institutions, but its intention was also to put reason and faith in opposition. I am not speaking here of that distinction which was born in the later Middle Ages based on the autonomy of the sciences, but of the imposed separation that did violence to the Nation's spiritual patrimony.

Nevertheless, I retained the conviction that those attempts would never definitively achieve their purpose. This conviction was strengthened in me, thanks to my personal encounters with men of science, professors of various disciplines who expressed the deep desire for dialogue and the common search for truth. I expressed this conviction also as Pope when I wrote: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth" (*Fides et Ratio*,

n. 1).

Your presence here inspires in me the hope that this invigorating dialogue will continue and that none of the present-day ideologies will be able to interrupt it. With this hope I look to all universities, academies and high schools. I hope that the great intellectual and spiritual opportunities of the Polish scientific world meet with adequate material support so as to be recognized and spread throughout the world for the good of all.

Once more, I thank you and ask that you take my greetings to your academic communities. God bless you!