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Habemus primum doctorem *honoris causa* – Joannem Paulum II papam

The thought of granting the Holy Father St. John Paul II the title of *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Rzeszów (UR), as the first person to be granted such a title in the five-year history of the University, was already conceived while the Pope was still alive. In actual fact, this took place during the academic session: “Martyrs and witnesses of faith. Communist repressions against the clergy in Rzeszów”, which took place at UR on 18th January 2005, with the participation of H.E. Archbishop Edward Nowak, the then secretary of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, since the said session was related to the ongoing beatification process of Fr. Władysław Findysz,¹ martyr of the communist period in Poland. During a conversation session with the participation of Archbishop Edward Nowak,² the Rector of UR, prof. Włodzimierz Bonusiak,³ as well as the Ordinary of the Diocese of Rzeszów, H.E. Mons. Kazimierz Górny,⁴ the idea of granting the first *doctor honoris causa* at the 5th Anniversary of the establishment of UR

¹ Blessed Władysław Findysz (1907-1964) a Polish Roman Catholic priest. He was imprisoned under the Communist regime in 1963 until not too long before his death on the charges of sending religious newsletters to his parishioners. He was beatified under Pope Benedict XVI on 19 June 2005, though the pontiff delegated that Cardinal Józef Glemp preside on his behalf in Warsaw.

² Mons. Edward Nowak – (born 1940) is a Polish bishop. In 1990, he was appointed Secretary of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and was ordained Titular Archbishop of Luni.

³ Prof. Włodzimierz Bonusiak-Rector of the University of Rzeszów 2002-2008.

⁴ Mons. Kazimierz Górny (born 1937) – a Catholic bishop; the first bishop of the newly founded diocese of Rzeszów (1992-2013).

was born. The decision, concerning to whom this title should be granted, fell on the person of the Holy Father, St. John Paul II. The Faculty of Sociology and History of UR (S-H), by acclamation, passed a resolution to grant His Holiness John Paul II the honorary title of *doctor honoris causa*. The Council of the S-H Department appointed Prof. Fr. Stanisław Nabywaniec⁵ as the *laudatory*.⁶ In the light of this, the Senate of the University of Rzeszów, in a solemn resolution, stated, therefore, that: “John Paul II in the last days of his life had expressed his consent to accept the honorary title of *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Rzeszów. However, the death of His Holiness did not allow this mutual wish to be fulfilled within the frame of traditional academic procedures. We, therefore, decided to award the title of *doctor honoris causa* to John Paul II posthumously. We do it in the belief that our intentions justify doing so.”⁷

The ceremony of awarding the title to the Holy Father, began at 8.30 am on February 20, 2006, with the Holy Mass in the University Chapel dedicated to St. Jadwiga Królowa, where rectors of the University of Rzeszów, the University Senate, deputies, local government authorities and many guests were gathered. This Eucharist was a thanksgiving to the Lord God for the person and ministry of John Paul II, who was “a gift and a mystery, a gift for the Church, the Fatherland as well as God’s gift for the whole world.”⁸ Bishop Kazimierz Górny, presided the Mass and, along with the concelebrating priests and the entire liturgical assembly, he prayed for the prompt beatification of the Servant of God John Paul II. In his homily, he called for the commemoration of the great program of the Holy Father and encouraged its implementation.⁹

The award ceremony began after the Mass, in the university hall. The choir performed the ancient Marian song “Bogurodzica”, after which Prof. Włodzimierz Bonusiak, Rector of UR, welcomed the guests with warm and

⁵ Fr. Stanisław Nabywaniec– (born 1958 in Zasław, Poland) is a Catholic priest, Professor of History (History of the Early Modern Period, History of the Church, History of the Oriental Churches). Currently, a full professor at the University of Rzeszów.

⁶ *Doktorat honorowy Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego dla Jana Pawła II*, in: http://pokolenie-jp2.pl/info.php?dzial=2006/02_20_01 (26.03.2019).

⁷ A. Rząsa, *Doktorat honorowy dla Jana Pawła II*, „Rzeszów Nasz Dom. Miesięcznik Społeczno-Kulturalny” 2 (2006), nr 5(3), p. 3.

⁸ *Przemówienie JE Biskupa Kazimierza Górnego*, „Gazeta Uniwersytecka Pracowników i Studentów Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego”, Nr 3(40) (2006), p. 7.

⁹ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, „Niedziela. Tygodnik Katolicki. Edycja Rzeszowska”, Nr. 10 (2006), p. 1.



fot. Elżbieta Wójcikiewicz

cordial words and inaugurated an extraordinary, solemn meeting of the Senate of the University of Rzeszów.¹⁰

The university hall, which gathered many distinguished guests, among others: authorities from the Church, the University, the State and the Local government, was wonderfully decorated with ornaments. A focal point was the papal armchair, set on the stage of the auditorium, on which lay the *Soli Deo* donated by John Paul II during his visit to Rzeszów in June 1991.¹¹ Along with the portrait of the Holy Father, they recalled his presence¹² in the university auditorium.

Among the numerous invited distinguished guests, there were, among others: H. Em. Card. Marian Jaworski from Lviv, Ukraine, the Metropolitan of Lviv of the Latin rite and chairman of the Episcopal Conference of Ukraine; H.E. Archbishop Józef Michalik, Metropolitan of Przemyśl, chairman of the Episcopal

¹⁰ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, „Niedziela. Tygodnik Katolicki. Edycja Rzeszowska”, Nr. 10 (2006), p. 1.

¹¹ M. Kolasa, *Honoris causa Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego dla Jana Pawła II*, „Niedziela. Tygodnik Katolicki. Edycja Sandomierska”, Nr. 12 (2006), p. 1.

¹² A. Trzeźniowska, *Uczczenie Jana Pawła II*, „Nasz Dziennik”, Nr 44 (2454) z 21 lutego 2006.

Conference of Poland; H.E. Archbishop Jan Martyniak, Metropolitan of the Przemyśl-Warsaw of the Greek Catholic Church; Auxiliary bishop of Tarnów, H.E. Mons. Wiktor Skworec; the Bishop of Sandomierz, H.E. Mons. Andrzej Dzięga; the Bishop of the Military Ordinariate of Poland, H.E. General Tadeusz Płoski; the Bishop of Rzeszów, H.E. Mons. Kazimierz Górny as well as the auxiliary bishops from the following Dioceses: Sandomierz, H.E. Mons. Edward Frankowski and H.E. Mons. Marian Zimałek; Przemyśl – H.E. Mons. Marian Rojek and H.E. Mons. Adam Szal; and H.E. Mons. Edward Białogłowski from Rzeszów. The Zamość-Lubaczów Diocese was represented by delegated prelates. A great number of priests, mainly from the Diocese of Rzeszów, also participated in the academic ceremony.¹³ The Polish Army was represented by four generals, while the Warsaw Garrison Command was represented by Col. Kazimierz Gilarski. The representative of the Polish Army Curia was the Chancellor, Rev. Fr. Comm. Leon Szot.¹⁴ Distinguished guests from the laity included: Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Dr. Eng. Mieczysław Janowski; government authorities at the voivodship level, headed by Ewa Draus, the Voivode of Rzeszów; local government authorities, headed by Leszek Deptuła, the Marshal of the Subcarpathian Voivodeship and Tadeusz Ferenc, the President of the City of Rzeszów.¹⁵ There were also delegations from Rzeszów universities. Other than the Rector and Vice-rectors of Rzeszów University of Technology, Rectors and Vice-rectors of the following educational institutions were also present: the University of Information Technology and Management; the University of Law and Public Administration; the Higher School of Law and Administration School of Management; the School of Economics and Social Sciences (University of Economic and Social) and state-owned higher vocational schools in Subcarpathia;¹⁶ the Catholic University of Lublin, John Paul II; and the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow.¹⁷ School headmasters whose schools are named after John Paul II were also invited, together with starosts and mayors from Subcarpathia; directors of work establishments, banks and other business

¹³ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, p. 2.

¹⁴ ZJK, *Kronika Diecezji Wojskowej. Rzeszów*, „Nasza Służba. Dwutygodnik Ordynariatu Polowego Wojska Polskiego”, R. 15 (2006), nr 3(511), p. 15.

¹⁵ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, p. 2.

¹⁶ *Wystąpienie Rektora Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego prof. dr. hab. Włodzimierza Bonusiaka*, „Gazeta Uniwersytecka Pracowników i Studentów Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego”, Nr 3(40) (2006), p. 4.

¹⁷ *Przemówienie JE Biskupa Kazimierza Górnego*, p. 7.

entities related to the University of Rzeszów, as well as numerous representatives of the world of culture and law from the city of Rzeszów.¹⁸

Addressing the guests and the university community, His Magnificence Rector Włodzimierz Bonusiak began his speech with the following words: “Theotokos, the Virgin, the most-praised-through-God Mary”, with these words knights and bollards, and later the mass mobilisation, went on to fight the enemies of our Homeland. We, the Academic Community of the University of Rzeszów and our dear Guests gathered at today’s Ceremony, follow the footsteps of this tradition in order to commemorate the Polish Pope, His Holiness Pope John Paul II.”¹⁹ Later in the speech, the Rector said: “We have decided to organise today’s ceremony on the anniversary of the date when Holy Father had given his consent to accept this title. We are aware of the fact that these titles are granted for the splendour of those whose receive them. However, there are also titles that bring eternal honour to the university, despite being granted by the University itself. This title is an honour to our university, and I am convinced that the Academic Community can prove that, through work and teaching, it deserves to be honoured.”²⁰

On behalf of the Senate of the University of Rzeszów, who at an extraordinary meeting unanimously adopted the resolution to grant the Holy Father Pope John Paul II the honorary title of *doctor honoris causa*²¹ and confirmed that His Holiness gave his consent to accept such honour, the Rector read out the decree conferring the title of *doctor honoris causa* of Rzeszów University. Words of particular importance are: “To the Bishop of Rome, the Pastor of the Universal Church, the Pope, who so often emphasized the dignity and importance of universities, contributing towards reconciliation and peace between nations, including the building of the unity and spiritual identity of Europe, who in the last days of his life agreed to accept the honorary doctorate of the University of Rzeszów.”²²

Then, Prof. Fr. Stanisław Nabywaniec, Director of the Institute of History of UR, delivered a laudation, in which he emphasized that John Paul II “spoke

¹⁸ *Wystąpienie Rektora Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Wystąpienie Rektora Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, p. 4.

²⁰ A. Rząsa, *Doktorat honorowy dla Jana Pawła II*, p. 3; *Wystąpienie Rektora Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, p. 4.

²¹ A. Rząsa, *Doktorat honorowy dla Jana Pawła II*, p. 3.

²² A. Trzeźniowska, *Uczczenie Jana Pawła II*, op. cit.

and taught from many departments: in the university – as an academic teacher; from the Cathedral of Cracow, from the Cathedral of St. Peter – as a teacher of the peoples and nations, and lastly, as Benedict XVI expressed it, from the “cathedral” of suffering.²³ He ended the laudation with the words: “Our Alma Mater, solemnly proclaims *Gaudium magnum habemus primum doctorem honoris causa, Joannem Paulum II papam.*”²⁴

After the laudation, the Rector asked Prof. Fr. S. Nabywaniec and the Dean of the Faculty of Sociology and History, Prof. Aleksander Bobko,²⁵ to hand over the document, granting His Holiness the honorary title of *doctor honoris causa*, to H.E. Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz, the long-standing personal secretary of John Paul II and his successor at the episcopal cathedral in Krakow. This sublime moment was accompanied by the hymn “*Gaude Mater Polonia*”. A copy of this document was also given by the Rector to Mons. Kazimierz Górny for John Paul II Institute in Rzeszów. The Archbishop, with great emotion and timidity, in a certain way in the spiritual presence of John Paul II, on whose behalf, accepted the honourable title – the highest university distinction.²⁶ While accepting the diploma, the Metropolitan of Krakow said: “I humbly lend him my hands and mouth so that he can receive this diploma and speak with words from his own teachings,”²⁷ emphasising that the whole life of John Paul II was a great testimony of the covenant between reason, faith and holiness.²⁸ In his speech, he expressed his gratitude above all for what had happened, recalling the words of John Paul II addressed to universities, with the aim to show how much the Holy Father respected and loved the world of science and culture. To paraphrase, he said: “The University of Rzeszów, despite being a young educational institution, is rooted in the whole history of Polish science”. Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz made a statement, putting side by side the oldest Polish university, the Jagiellonian University, and one of the youngest Polish universities, i.e. the University of Rzeszów: “While the first Polish university, whose chronicle recorded the granting of the honorary title of *doctor honoris causa* to Pope John

²³ <http://www.ur.edu.pl/uniwerytet/wydarzenia/2006/honoris-causa/laudacja> (26.03.2019).

²⁴ <http://www.ur.edu.pl/uniwerytet/wydarzenia/2006/honoris-causa/laudacja> (26.03.2019).

²⁵ Aleksander Bobko (born 1952) – a professor of the humanities. He was a Dean (2004–2008) of the Faculty of Sociology and History at University of Rzeszów.

²⁶ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, p. 2.

²⁷ A. Trzeźniowska, *Uczczenie Jana Pawła II*, op. cit.

²⁸ A. Rzaśa, *Doktorat honorowy dla Jana Pawła II*, p. 3.

Paul II, was the Jagiellonian University – the oldest Polish university, the last Polish university, which granted this honourable title to the Holy Father was the youngest Polish university – the University of Rzeszów. With the celebration of the 5th anniversary of the existence of your university, the last title of *doctor honoris causa* of John Paul II is recorded in history. I am sure that the Holy Father would express his joy that the University of Rzeszów exists. He would have said: *Alma Mater Ressoviensis* – it's good that you are here.”²⁹ These two Polish universities are classed as the first and last *doctor honoris causa* title given to John Paul II. The last and at the same time the first, because, for the young Rzeszów University, it is its first *doctor honoris causa* granted to this Great Pole – our Holy Father.³⁰ In his final remarks, once again, he was thankful for the honourable award of the title of *doctor honoris causa* to John Paul II, whose entire life was a testimony to the covenant of reason, faith and holiness.³¹

This part of the celebration was highlighted by the singing of the academic choir under the direction of Prof. Marta Wierzbieniec.³² After the concert of the university choir, Bishop Kazimierz Górny expressed his gratitude to all those were present in the ceremony of granting the title of *doctor honoris causa* to the Holy Father and for everyone involved in organising the event.³³ He ended his speech with these words: “May today’s meeting with God’s servant John Paul II help us all to love God more and to do more good deeds to every human being. We wish the University of Rzeszów a joyful and faithful fulfilment of the words that appear on the title page of the invitation, the very words of Pope John Paul II: “University! Be at the service of truth. Being at the service of truth, you serve mankind”. And I would add: “In this way, you serve God and Poland.”³⁴

The ceremony ended with the unveiling and dedication of the plaque³⁵ commemorating the *doctor honoris causa* for John Paul II, located in the main

²⁹ A. Rząsa, *Doktorat honorowy dla Jana Pawła II*, p. 3.

³⁰ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, „Niedziela. Tygodnik Katolicki. Edycja Rzeszowska”, Nr. 10 (2006), p. 1-2.

³¹ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, „Niedziela. Tygodnik Katolicki. Edycja Rzeszowska”, Nr. 10 (2006), p. 2.

³² W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, „Niedziela. Tygodnik Katolicki. Edycja Rzeszowska”, Nr. 10 (2006), p. 2.

³³ W. Matyskiewicz, *Od Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego do Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego*, p. 2.

³⁴ *Przemówienie JE Biskupa Kazimierza Górnego*, p. 7.

³⁵ A. Rząsa, *Doktorat honorowy dla Jana Pawła II*, p. 3.

building of the university, together with the inauguration of the photographic exhibitions: “In the footsteps of John Paul II in Subcarpathia,”³⁶ which took place in the university lobby and library. The book, entitled: “The Idea of University in the teaching of John Paul II”, prepared specifically for this important ceremony under the redaction of Prof. Waldemar Furmanka, was also presented.³⁷

Laudation³⁸

Your Eminence, Archbishop of Metropolitan of Lviv of the Latin rite, city-bearer of the glorious title of *Semper Fidelis*,

Excellencies,

The Most Reverend Archbishop, President of the Polish Bishops' Conference and Metropolitan of Przemyśl of the Latin Rite,

Archbishop of the Metropolitan of Cracow,

Władyka, Archbishop of the Metropolitan of Przemyśl – Warsaw of the Greek Catholic, that is the Byzantine-Ukrainian rite

Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese of Rzeszów,

Bishops Ordinaries of the Diocese of Sandomierz, Tarnów and the Military Ordinariate of the Polish Army,

Auxiliary Bishops of the Archdiocese of Przemyśl, Diocese of Sandomierz and Diocese of Rzeszów

Senators and Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland,

MEPs of the European Parliament

Your Magnificence, Rector of the University of Rzeszów and Senate of the same University,

Magnificencies, Rectors of the Catholic University of Lublin in Lublin and of State and Private Universities in the city of Rzeszów and of the region,

Venerable priests,

Representatives of State and Local Government Authorities and Uniformed Services from Subcarpathia,

³⁶ *Doktorat honorowy Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego dla Jana Pawła II*, w: http://pokolenie-jp2.pl/info.php?dzial=2006/02_20_01 (26.03.2019).

³⁷ A. Łapkowski, *Doktorat dla papieża*, „Super Nowości” z 21 II 2006 r.

³⁸ *Laudacja*, „Gazeta Uniwersytecka”, Nr 1-2(39) (2006), p. 4-5; *Laudacja*, „Zwiastowanie”, R.15 (2006), nr 1, p. 4-10.

Academic Community of the University of Rzeszów,
Ladies and gentlemen!

By the order of the High Council of the Faculty of Sociology and History and the Honourable Senate of the University of Rzeszów, befalls onto me the honour to give this laudatory speech on the occasion of the announcement of the award of the title of *doctor honoris causa*, a laudation commemorating the very First *Doctor Honoris Causa* of the University of Rzeszów granted to an Extraordinary Man, a Man of Great Spirit and Great Moral Authority, today a Servant of God, the Holy Father John Paul II, John Paul the Great, a great Pope and a great Pole, whose life and ministry in the Church God marked with great signs and wonders (paraphrase, Acts 1: 22), and whose informal process of beatification, in accordance with the ancient custom of the Church proclaimed *subitosanto* by the faithful, already began on the day of his funeral.

The fact that today we are witnessing in our University this extraordinary, first ceremony of the award of the title *doctor honoris causa* to the Holy Father John Paul II and its acceptance by him, is not a coincidence. Neither is it a delayed act.

On January 18, 2005, we had an academic session at the University of Rzeszów, with the participation of the Secretary of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, H.E. Mons. Archbishop Edward Nowak, in connection with the preparation of the beatification of the first martyr of Poland during the communist period, Servant of God Fr. Władysław Findysz. It was then, that the thought of granting the first honorary doctorate of the University of Rzeszów to the Holy Father, John Paul II came to the fore. This idea gained unanimous acceptance in the entire academic community of the University. After that the appropriate procedural steps were taken by Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz, the personal secretary of His Holiness, in the Holy See, with great commitment and kindness, who is present here among us. And already in February 2005, the Holy Father had accepted the title granted him by the University of Rzeszów.

By providing the above-mentioned circumstances, I would like to emphasize the upright and transparent intention of our University in today's solemn act of awarding the honorary doctor's title to the Holy Father, John Paul II. The University of Rzeszów, in honouring His Holiness with this title, wanted to repay the Holy Father a huge debt of gratitude, which we will discuss in the next part of the laudation.

His serious illness and then death prevented us from awarding His Holiness the diploma and other attributes of the honorary doctor in a solemn way. And although at first glance, it might seem that today's ceremony is a delayed

reflex and an attempt to repair the negligence from our part – the above chain of events clearly shows that it is not. Our young University simply did not have the opportunity to do it earlier, when it was done by other larger Polish, as well as world renowned universities. Neither is today's ceremony a *post mortem* award of the title, which indeed has many precedents, but it is only the final act of the entire process, i.e. the solemn announcement of the granting of the title and dignity on the occasion of the anniversary of the acceptance of such award by the Holy Father John Paul II himself.

What are the premises that justified granting the title of *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Rzeszów to the Holy Father, John Paul II? It seems that there are several of them, starting from reasons that are general to those very personal.

The Pope is the head of the Universal Church, the rock on which the Church is erected. The Church and the university have a lot in common, not only because the Church, and especially the Popes, were the basis for the formation of a university institution, but because both institutions grow out of, so to say, "leaning over the book" – the Church over the Book of Divine Revelation, while the university over the book of human intellect, inspired and hand written by man, and for this, and perhaps mainly because both the Church and university possess the attribute of universality, inscribed in both the name and the nature of both institutions: *ecclesia catholica, ecclesia oecumenica, ecclesia universalis* – Universal Church. *Universitas* – universality. University, also known in our past as the academy, is *universitas magistrorum et scholarium, universitas literarum, universitas studiorum*. The binding factor of this universality of both institutions is the superior, timeless and objective value that they both serve – i.e. the TRUTH.

The words spoken by the Holy Father in the courtyard of the Catholic University of Lublin on June 9, 1987: "University... be at the service of truth!", can be applied to any university, after all "the university's primary mission is the constant search for truth through scientific research", truth as an objective value. John Paul II also reminded that "the vocation of every university is to serve the truth: its discovery and transmission to the others". These words were phrased in the context of the fact that today, there is a tendency towards increasing fragmentation, known as specialization, in sciences at universities. In modern times, trends such as positivism, scientism, extreme scepticism and subjectivism have come to the fore in science. Relativism, extreme subjectivism, pragmatism or utilitarianism proclaim that there is no objective truth. Moral values have been relativized, they have been deprived of the dimension of universality and objectivity, and shoved to the private sphere. Since there are no universal and

objective values, then it is necessary to focus on what is allegedly “objectively transferable”, “intersubjectively verifiable”. What is considered as subjective, empirically unverifiable in the category of science of the period of Enlightenment, was pushed aside. To a large extent, such views influence the structure and way of functioning of modern universities. They are excessively focused on intellectual achievements, striving for increasingly narrow specializations, which to some extent also has its pluses, but... they cannot neglect the negative effects of this increasing fragmentation. Excessive specialization (fragmentation) of knowledge can lead a man to get lost in a pluralistic world where there is a belief that the value of things is completely relative. A man educated by such a model, with a great deal of possibilities and information in front of his eyes, will not be able to discern what is objectively good, real and beautiful. Meanwhile, there is no relative truth, because, as Seneca wrote, “*veritas in omnem partem sui eadem est*” – the truth is the same on all sides.

The Church is aware that she is the depositary of the objective Truth. The Holy Father John Paul II was, in a special way, at the service of this truth, this objective truth, this personal truth, the Truth Incarnated, fulfilling in the Church the highest teaching office. In Toruń, during a meeting with the rectors of the universities on June 7, 1999, our great compatriot linked the problem of truth in the context of study and research, saying: “Today, the world tries, by no means occasionally, to convince us that the time of certainty in knowing the truth has come to an end irreversibly and that we are irrevocably condemned to a total lack of sense, the makeshift nature of cognition, constant variability and relativity. In such a situation, there is an urgent need to confirm the fundamental trust in human reason and its ability to know the truth – including the one which is absolute and ultimate”. John Paul II served the truth in the conviction that “he owes the world the truth” and in the conviction that “by learning the truth... man... achieves self-realisation”.

Furthermore, University, by revealing to the students its teachings of the truth, should not only educate, but also help them to achieve self-realisation, i.e. to shape their personality. This formation function, associated with parenthood, has been assigned to University since its existence. University was referred to as *Alma Mater*. *Alma Mater* “means the one who gives birth and who up brings, educates”. Therefore, the words of Pliny the Younger “*educuntur hic, qui hic nascuntur*” – those, who are born here, will be brought up here – could also be referred to university. The parenthood, in the spiritual sense, is also associated with the bishop’s ministry, primarily the bishops of the patriarchal capitals,

including Rome. According to the ancient term of Tertullian who stated: “*episcopus imago patris est*” – bishop is the image of a father.

Parenthood is associated with love and upbringing. Today, man lacks love in general, especially parental love. This leads to a crisis of identity and social problems in various forms. The function of a proper education is demanding love. In accordance to the Greek concept of *paideia*, education or upbringing is the shaping of a human being that includes spiritual, moral and intellectual formation, the formation of a proper way of thinking, and the proper establishment of the hierarchy of values. *Paideia*, which involves the entire being of man, has been at the core of the university’s education system from the very beginning. Although in the Middle Ages autonomy was already given to the intellectual formation, so that it could develop freely, it was always considered as part of the overall shaping of the human person. The spiritual, moral, intellectual and aesthetic side have always been treated as a united whole. John Paul II touched upon this very same vocation of university, “given that the integral concept of the human person is the condition *sine qua non* for a healthy development of science [...]”. On the other hand, “a deformed or incomplete vision of the human being easily turns learning from being a blessing into a serious threat to the human being”. To those who are formed and raised, he spoke with paternal and yet demanding love: “you must demand more of yourself! Even if others do not demand of you, you must be demanding with yourself!”

In the realities of the university as *Alma Mater*, the master-student relationship is the guarantor of the overall development of the human person of the student. “Experience teaches how important are the figures of true masters”, said the Holy Father in 1982 at one of the oldest European universities in Bologna. Again, in a speech addressed to the representatives of the world of science and culture gathered in the church of the Pauline Fathers w Skałka in 1979, he said: “when we say ‘professors’, we mean people of science, but at the same time we also mean pedagogues and educators”.

The Holy Father John Paul II is also a man of science. He is a great philosopher (anthropologist), an ethic, a statesman, enjoying great recognition and authority in both scientific and moral terms. He is a university man, of many universities. In the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, he confessed: “For many years, I myself have benefited from the benevolence of university life, enriching myself internally through what constitutes its essence: the zealous search for truth and selfless communication to young people and all those who teach the principles of strict reasoning in order to act in a righteous way and to better serve the

human community”. John Paul II spoke and taught from many departments: university as an academic professor, from the cathedral of Cracow and from the cathedral of St. Peter – as a teacher of peoples and nations, and last but not least, as Pope Benedict XVI expressed it, he spoke from the cathedral of suffering.

The University of Rzeszów has a special connection with the Subcarpathia region and the city of Rzeszów. It grows out of both the heritage of this part of Poland and the heritage of this city. Among the great cards of the Subcarpathia and the City are those that commemorate here, in this land, the presence of the Holy Father John Paul II during his Apostolic visits to the Homeland in 1991 and 1997. During his first visit to Subcarpathia, the Pope visited Rzeszów, Przemyśl and Lubaczów. It was then that he gave Subcarpathia an advocate and patron, by beatifying the Bishop of Przemyśl Józef Sebastian Pelczar, son of this land. Furthermore, Pope John Paul II accomplished a great work of integration of two fraternal nations (the Poles and the Ukrainians), two wings of one Catholic Church in our region, averting potential conflicts.

During his second visit to the Subcarpathia region in Krosno, Miejsce Piastowe and Dukla, “embracing this land with his heart”, the Holy Father bowed “with reverence over this Beskids land, which has suffered many wars and conflicts in history, and today continues to experience difficulties”. He also paid tribute to us, the inhabitants of this region, sometimes called the “eastern wall”, or Poland “B”, and asked us “stay faithful to the traditions of your forefathers”. In so doing, Pope John Paul II has ennobled Subcarpathia and its inhabitants, who were so very attached to their little piece of homeland, in which they hope and spread the grain with eyes looking towards the “horizon where the sky and the earth meet with prayers to heaven for harvest, for grain for the sower and seed for bread”. John Paul II felt much attachment with our land from the time when, as he mentioned in Krosno, he wandered “many times, either towards the Beskids Mountains, or in the opposite direction, from the Beskids Mountains, through the Low Beskids”. While “canonising John of Dukla, son of this land”, the Holy Father entrusted this land under his protection and care of Mary, Mother of Christ, who is “venerated in numerous sanctuaries on this land”.

The ennoblement for Subcarpathia came also from the establishment, by John Paul II, in this area, of two ecclesiastical Provinces – on March 25, 1992, the Metropolis of Przemyśl of the Latin rite, and on July 15, 1996, the Metropolis of Przemyśl – Warsaw of the Greek Catholic rite, i.e. the Byzantine-Ukrainian rite. The Holy Father established the city of Rzeszów as the capital of the Rzeszów Diocese, and the largest church in this city as the cathedral of the Bishop

of Rzeszów. John Paul II also founded the Diocese of Zamość-Lubaczów, part of which belongs to Subcarpathia and subordinated it to the Metropolitan of Przemyśl. The northern part of the Subcarpathia region, once a wilderness, he incorporated into the structure of the re-erected Diocese of Sandomierz, and the Church of Our Lady, the Queen of Poland, located in Stalowa Wola, was raised to the rank of the pro-cathedral of the Bishop of Sandomierz. On December 20, 2004, the Holy Father John Paul II promulgated the Decree proclaiming the martyrdom of the Servant of God Fr. Władysław Findysz, another son of the Subcarpathia region, recognised as the first martyr of Poland who died for the faith and for the Church during the communist period.

Finally, what is particularly important to us, which had not escaped the attention of the Holy Father, is the fact that the University of Rzeszów was founded in Rzeszów in 2001. On the occasion of the first inauguration of UR, in a letter to the Bishop of Rzeszów dated October 8, 2001, he wrote: “I am glad to learn that a new Polish university – University of Rzeszów – begins its academic and didactic activities in these days. This is a significant event for both the city of Rzeszów and the Subcarpathia region, as well as for the entire Polish world of science and culture. [...] I trust that this new University [...] will constantly be developing, becoming a recognised scientific, cultural and spiritual formation centre of Polish elites. [...] I bless everyone with my heart for efforts put in creating and strengthening this new Community of Enthusiasts of science and wisdom”.

For all this, I would like to express my gratitude to the Holy Father, especially for the lesson of “love for God, love for Homeland, love for neighbour and enemies, sense of national dignity, living in truth”, by “grounding firmly in our memories for future generations our awe, respect, gratitude, and recognition for the Great Pole, thanks to whom we owe our spiritual and national rebirth”. By virtue of the Resolution of 24th March 1998, the City Council of Rzeszów granted His Holiness Pope John Paul II the title of the Honorary Citizen of the City.

The University of Rzeszów, following the *adagium*: “*gratus esse debet, qui beneficium accepit*” – whoever received gestures of benevolence, should also be grateful – wished to give in return to the great donor, the Holy Father John Paul II, its modest gifts. In giving him thanks for the congratulatory message on the occasion of the establishment of our University, a delegation composed of the University authorities went to the Vatican, handing over personally to the Holy Father by the Ordinary of the Diocese of Rzeszów, Bishop Kazimierz Górny a book published as the result of an academic session, organised on the joyous occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Pontificate of John Paul II. Another

publication from the session dedicated to John Paul II was given to his successor Pope Benedict XVI. On behalf of the university community, a special tribute was given to Pope John Paul II by the choir during its autumn tour in 2005, with words of song and prayer by his tomb. Above all, however, the University of Rzeszów wants to express its gratitude to John Paul II, by honouring him with the highest university distinction, which is the title of *doctor honoris causa*.

It is a great joy that the Holy Father, in the last weeks before leaving for his Eternal Home, wanted to accept – a fact that he confirmed personally – the dignity and title of *doctor honoris causa* granted by the University of Rzeszów.

Today, on the first anniversary of this event, our University, our Alma Mater, solemnly proclaims the *gaudium magnum: habemus primum doctorem honoris causa, Joannem Paulum II papam*.

Translated: Fr. Jan Maria Chun Yean Choong

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