The theme that brings us here to celebrate our Jubilee is “The University for a New Humanism.” It invites us to renew our sense of vocation and mission in the service of truth to all of the cultures we represent here. But we cannot be bearers of hope for the renewal of the university and the life of society unless we actually live what we profess.

The appearance of “humanistic” movements implies a paradox. Often in the course of history, they entail a radical deformation of human life as seen in social customs and institutions, an abandonment of clear ideas that are discredited because they have been obscured and confused by many. Hence every such humanism is an attempt to renounce the appearances of inhumanity and contains an anguished desire to return human beings to the true source of their dignity.

The inhumanity implicated in all forms of modern humanism has failed to overcome its own internal contradictions. The pretension of Protagoras, according to which “man is the measure of all things,” symbolizes this paradox. It wants to distinguish the rational creature from all others while at the same time idolizing reason as the fountain of all truth. Thus the history of human progress has also been the history of human degradation. Hence also the irreconcilable opposition in the eyes of the world between those who truly love
wisdom, and sophists; between those who see the mind as open to reality so as to comprehend it in all its aspects, and those who enclose the mind within itself and value it only for its ability to manipulate reality, subject only to the limitations of available technology.

*Fides et Ratio* has given us a profound elucidation of modern thought in regard to this dilemma and the consequent divorce between reason and wisdom. The encyclical lists (85-91) eclecticism, scientism, historicism, pragmatism, and nihilism as various positions which demeany the data of revelation and go on to undermine confidence in reason’s capacity to find the unity in reality. When reason loses confidence in its own capacity to contemplate the truth, man is blinded to the objectivity of historical events and becomes capable of corrupting his dignity in the most extreme and arbitrary ways.

As members of university communities, we know that this dilemma affects not only contemporary culture—which emancipates science and technology from moral norms—but also the university itself and our daily labors within it, immersed as we are in a vocation of service to persons of the most diverse backgrounds. As Chesterton said, “The wise man is the one who thrusts his head into heaven; the mad man is the one who thrusts heaven into his head,” believing that he is the measure of all things. That is the dilemma of contemporary humanism which we encounter everyday in the classroom and the laboratory.

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Has the loss of the metaphysical meaning of reality made it impossible to understand human behavior and its freedom? Is the human person completely unique, the only subject and object of culture, as John Paul II told UNESCO (June 2, 1980; 7, 8), or can the proper functioning of society no longer recognize this because of its exclusive concern with efficiency?

Nietzsche portrayed nihilism as lacking in finality and unable to ask the question, Why? (*The Will to Power*). If reason cannot discern the finality of human acts, neither can it recognize an objective, absolute norm by which human actions can be oriented to their natural end. *Fides et Ratio* invites us to review the great Christian philosophers and theologians in order to affirm once again that reason is not based on self-regulating natural, social, or political processes in quest of stability, but on the needs of the human heart for ultimate answers concerning life in the world. As the Church’s metaphysical tradition has admirably expressed it, the desire for truth is rooted in human nature. But the same tradition teaches that the search for universal truth must operate within
the limits of human understanding. The mind can approach the threshold of the Mystery it so ardently wants to know, but it cannot penetrate that Mystery by itself. Only the light of faith that proceeds from God Himself can cross that threshold.

Besides *Fides et Ratio*, the Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is also a prophetic document for the evangelization of culture in the new millennium: “Our era urgently needs to hear the meaning of truth proclaimed, lest freedom, justice, and human dignity disappear.... Therefore it is necessary to work enthusiastically and fearlessly in all the fields of knowledge, aware that He who is, the *Logos*, has gone before us, and that His Spirit of understanding and love gives to the human person the capacity to encounter the ultimate reality which is our principle and our end” (6).

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From the nihilist perspective, the coherence of reality is achieved by a self-sustaining will to power. Such a perspective makes gratitude for self-giving and the experience of inter-personal communion incomprehensible. Violent forms of manipulation further obscure it. Yet Christians bear witness to it and continue to discover in contemplation ever more of the Mystery in the world through God’s mercy and wisdom.

The capacity of culture to overcome the tragedy of nihilism, its arbitrary and self-destructive separation of reason and will, its proclamation of the neutrality of reason and technique, and of the survival of the fittest, will depend in large measure upon the university’s return to its original mission. *Fides et Ratio* provides the path a sapiential rationality must take in pursuing the ultimate meaning of things. To follow that path, members of the university community must renew their desire for conversion to Christ, who alone ennobles that mission. That is the “threshold of hope” which the Holy Father invites us to cross.

DISCOURSE OF THE HOLY FATHER
At a Meeting with the Academic Community
*Vatican City, September 9, 2000*

1....My thoughts turn to university teachers of all nations as well as to the students entrusted to their guidance on the path of research, a path both arduous and joyful, and I send them cordial greetings....
2. The basic theme which you have considered—*The University for a New Humanism*—fits well with the Jubilee’s rediscovery of the centrality of Christ....As men and women of learning, you never cease to inquire into the value of the human person. Each of you could say, with the ancient philosopher, “I am looking for man”! Among the many responses given to this fundamental quest, you have accepted that given by Christ.... “Ecce Homo: Behold the man!” In showing Christ’s battered face to the frenzied crowd, Pilate did not imagine that he would, in a sense, speak a word of revelation. Unwittingly he pointed out to the world the One in whom all human beings can recognize their origin, and in whom all can hope to find their salvation. *Redemptor Hominis*: this is the image of Christ which, from my first encyclical, I have sought to “shout” to the world, and which the Jubilee year seeks to propose anew to human minds and hearts.

3. Drawing your inspiration from Christ, who reveals man to himself (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22), you have chosen in the meetings of these days to reaffirm the need for a university culture which is genuinely “humanistic,” in the sense—primarily—that culture must correspond to the human person and overcome the temptation to a knowledge which yields to pragmatism or which loses itself in the endless meanderings of erudition. Such knowledge is incapable of giving meaning to life....It is to truth that all research looks, albeit with the limitations and fatigue of human thought. This is an aspect which needs to be underlined, lest we succumb to the climate of relativism to which a large part of today’s culture falls prey. The reality is that if culture is not directed toward truth, which must be sought both humbly and confidently, it is doomed to disappear into the ephemeral, losing itself to the instability of opinion, and perhaps giving itself over to the domineering will—though often disguised—of the strongest. *A culture without truth does not safeguard freedom but puts it at risk.* I have said this on a number of occasions: “The demands of truth and morality neither degrade nor abolish our freedom, but on the contrary enable freedom to exist and liberate it from its own inherent threat.”...

4. Rooted in the perspective of truth, Christian humanism implies first of all an openness to the Transcendent. It is here that we find the truth and the grandeur of the human person, the only creature in the visible world capable of self-awareness and recognition that he is surrounded by that supreme Mystery that both reason and faith call God.... Yet we cannot be satisfied with an ambiguous reconciliation of the kind favored by a culture that doubts the very
ability of reason to arrive at truth. This path risks **mistranslating faith by reducing it to a feeling**, to an emotion, to art—in the end stripping faith of a critical foundation. But this would not be Christian faith, which demands instead a reasonable and responsible acceptance of all that God has revealed in Christ.... I strongly encourage you, men and women of the university, to spare no effort in rebuilding that aspect of learning which is open to Truth and the Absolute.

5. Today the most attentive epistemological reflection recognizes the need for the human and natural sciences to enter into dialogue once again, so that learning may recover the sense of a profoundly unified inspiration. Scientific and technological progress in our day puts into human hands possibilities which are both magnificent and frightening. A recognition of the limits of science, in the consideration of moral demands, is not obscurantism but is the guarantee that research will be worthy of the human person and put at the service of life. You, my dear friends who are involved in scientific research, must make universities “cultural laboratories” in which theology, philosophy, human sciences and natural sciences may engage in constructive dialogue, looking to the moral law as an intrinsic requirement of research and a condition for its full value in seeking out the truth.

6. The humanism which we desire advocates a vision of society centered on the human person and his inalienable rights, on the values of justice and peace, on a correct relationship between individuals, society and the state, on the logic of solidarity and subsidiarity. It is a humanism capable of giving a soul to economic progress itself, so that it may be directed to “the promotion of each individual and of the whole person.” In particular, it is urgent for us to work to ensure that the **true sense of democracy**, an authentic achievement of culture, is fully safeguarded. In this regard, worrisome trends have emerged, as when democracy is reduced to a purely procedural matter, or when it is thought that the will of the majority is sufficient of itself to determine the moral acceptability of law.... “Only the acknowledgement of an objective moral law, the ‘natural law’ written in the human heart, is the obligatory point of reference for civil law itself” (Evangelium Vitae, 70)....

8. Distinguished teachers! On the Gospel is founded an understanding of the world and of the human person that does not cease to unleash cultural, humanistic and ethical values for a correct vision of life and of history. Be profoundly convinced of this, and make it a gauge of your commitment. The
Church...continues to look upon universities with deep fondness, and from you she expects a decisive contribution so that this institution will enter into the new millennium having rediscovered itself as a place where openness to knowledge, passion for truth, and interest in the future of humanity may develop in a noteworthy way. May this Jubilee meeting place its indelible mark within each of you and inspire you with new strength for this demanding task....

SUMMARIES OF INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES
DURING THE WORLD MEETING OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

At a Meeting of John Paul II with the Academic Community
Vatican City, September 9, 2000

A. The Human Person: Genealogy, Biology, Biography
Dr. Margaret Melady, American University of Rome

...As we move into the next millennium, there is reason to believe that in this era of post-modernity we will see a major breakthrough in dialogue between the faith and the world. Most hopeful is philosophical inquiry into inter-personal relationships seen in the context of divine filiation. Many contemporary authors look to personal dignity in the capacity to establish relationships of knowledge and love with other persons and with the community. Lest these inquiries lead only to human development based on the finite self, a new humanism must recognize the infinite Being with whom each person is called to enter into communion and through whom the person realizes his full dignity....

B. The City of Man: Society, Environment, Economy
Dr. Jean-Dominique Durand, University of Lyon

2. Entering the third millennium, we find man confronted by a radically new world full of ambivalences and steadily accelerating novelties. This world is characterized by the end of opposed camps and by the progress of democracy, but at the same time by the proliferation of micronationalism and local wars. Unprecedented scientific and technological progress endangers ecological balance and threatens the Christian conception of life and thought. An astonishing reduction of distances, thanks to progress in transportation and communication, facilitates the coming together of peoples, cultures, and economies, but at the cost of chaotic urbanization and globalization. Once more, the human person is at risk. Holy Father, as you reminded the United Nations on October 5, 1995, “on this horizon of universality, we are seeing the forceful emergence
of ethnic and cultural minorities pursuing an urgent need for identity and survival, as a kind of counterweight to growing uniformity.”

5. According to the doctrine of the Church, the human person occupies a place at the heart of contemporary social development. Therefore our reflections on the city and the environment were based on the inalienable dignity of the person, and our research envisioned a better quality of life for all, including the handicapped, which is the only way to build a truly human community. The future common to all “men of good will” holds out a culture of life, integration of the marginal into the community, social justice achieved through a culture of work, and improvement of the natural and social environment. In order to be “authentically human,” the good use of leisure will bring all of these together. A new anthropology of “free time” is our greatest challenge so that both body and soul will not be devoted to idleness and enslavement by the abuses so familiar today, but to the noble enrichment of human life.

7. One after another, our diverse studies touched on the importance of social science research aimed at defining a “human city” founded on man as person, a city which gives primary attention to the message of the Gospel. In this way, whether concentrating on the urban or rural environment, economic laws, or health and education, we reach the core of being itself. In this respect, our studies become bearers of the Christian conception of human life.

C. The Sciences: Discovery, Technology, Application

Dr. Marijan Sunjic, University of Zagreb

...Recent developments, especially in biosciences, have shown that even pure scientific research becomes impossible without ethical guidelines which go beyond simple agreement to report and interpret scientific results honestly. When the object of research is human embryos or genetically modified forms of life, the fiction of a “value-free” science disappears. In these fields which are concerned with the great questions of life, its origin and end, ethical and legal issues cannot be set aside....

D. Creativity and Memory: Fine Arts, Literature, Music, Drama

Dr. Krzysztof Zaboklicki, University of Warsaw
1. ‘He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak’ (Mk 7:37)....In Jesus Christ the year of the Lord’s favor has begun for all humanity (cf. Lk 4:17-21). This year of favor crosses the centuries. It has marked all of history. It is the principle of resurrection and life, which affects not only humanity but creation itself (cf. Rom 8:19-22)....

2...Christ opens man to knowledge of both God and himself. He who is Truth (cf. Jn 14:6) opens man to the truth, touching him from within and thus healing ‘from within’ every human faculty. For you, dear brothers and sisters engaged in research and study, these words are an appeal to open your spirit to the truth that sets free! At the same time, Christ’s words summon you to become this ‘Ephphatha’ for countless hosts of young people, to become this word that opens the spirit to every aspect of truth in the different fields of learning. Seen in this light, your daily commitment becomes a following of Christ on the path of service to your brothers and sisters in the truth of love.

            Christ is the one who ‘has done all things well’ (Mk 7:37). He is the model to whom you must look unceasingly so that your academic activity becomes an effective service of the human longing for an ever fuller knowledge of truth.

3. ‘Say to those who are of a fearful heart: Be strong, fear not! Behold your God. He will come and save you!’ (Is 35:4). In these words your mission too, dear university men and women, is well delineated. Every day you are committed to proclaiming, defending and spreading the truth. Often this involves truths concerning the most diverse aspects of the cosmos and of history. The subject matter will not always touch directly on the problem of the ultimate meaning of life and the relationship with God, as in philosophy and theology. It abides, however, as the larger context of every thought. Even in research on areas of life that seem quite far from faith there is a hidden desire for truth and meaning which goes beyond the particular and the contingent.

            When the human person is not spiritually ‘deaf and dumb’ every area of thought, science and experience also brings a reflection of the Creator and gives rise to a desire for him, a desire often hidden and perhaps also repressed but which cannot be suppressed....
As scholars and teachers who have opened your hearts to Christ, your vocation is that of living and bearing witness in an effective way to this relationship between the individual branches of knowledge and that supreme ‘knowledge’ which concerns God, and which in a sense coincides with him, with his Word made flesh and with the Spirit of truth given by him. Through your contribution, the university becomes a place of the ‘Ephphatha’ where Christ—at work in you—continues to carry out the miracle of opening ears and lips, bringing about a new capacity for listening and a true communication.…

4. Ours is a time of great transformations that also involve the university world. The humanistic character of culture sometimes seems relegated to the periphery, while there is an increased tendency to reduce the horizon of knowledge to what can be measured and to ignore any question touching on the ultimate meaning of reality. We can ask ourselves what kind of men and women are being prepared by the university today.

To meet the challenge of creating a new authentic and integral humanism, the university needs people attentive to the word of the only Teacher; it needs qualified professionals who are credible witnesses to Christ. This mission is certainly not easy. It requires constant commitment; it is nourished by prayer and study; and it is expressed in the normal events of everyday life.…

5. Dear friends, it is a great joy for me to celebrate the Jubilee of Universities with you. This large and distinguished gathering is an eloquent sign of the cultural fruitfulness of faith. Fixing our gaze on the mystery of the Incarnate Word (cf. *Incarnationis Mysterium*), man discovers himself (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). He also experiences an intimate joy that finds expression in the interior style itself of studying and teaching. Knowledge thus overcomes the limits that reduce it to a merely functional and pragmatic process, and so it recovers its dignity as research in the service of man in the whole truth about himself, illuminated and guided by the Gospel.

Dear teachers, and students as well, this is your vocation: Make the university an environment where knowledge is cultivated, a place where the individual finds direction for the future, knowledge and inspiration for effective service of society. I entrust your journey to Mary, *Sedes Sapientiae*, whose image I entrust to you today, so that she may be welcomed as a teacher and a pilgrim on the university campuses of the world. As Mary supported the Apostles with her prayer at the dawn of evangelization, may she also help you to invigorate the university world with a Christian spirit.