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The Role of Ecclesiastical Faculties in the Contemporary World

+ Joseph Pittau S.J

Secretary, Congregation for Catholic Education, Vatican City

On behalf of His Eminence Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, and in my own name, I would like first of all to offer Father Noel Sheth, S.J., President of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, the academic and religious authorities, the professors, staff, students, alumnae and alumni, my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on this 75th anniversary of your existence as a degree conferring university.

In the past seventy years, three important Papal documents have been published that have organised ecclesiastical higher education: the Apostolic Constitution of 1931, *Deus scientiarum Dominus*, of Pope Pius XI; the *Normae quaedam ad constitutionem apostolicam "Deus scientiarum Dominus" de studiis ecclesiasticis recognoscendam* of 1968; and the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana*, promulgated by Pope John Paul II on Easter Sunday (15 April) 1979. That year, then, 1979, marked the final stage of a lengthy process of renewing the Church's academic legislation in the light of today's needs – the needs of the Church and the needs of the modern university. Finally, with

his Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, published on 15 August, 1991, Pope John Paul II set forth the Church's legislation for all Catholic universities throughout the world.

1. The Apostolic Constitution "Deus scientiarum Dominus"

Of course, the academic and educational apostolate of the Church does not just date back to 1931. Right from the start of its two-thousand year-old history, the Church, *mater et magistra*, has viewed the school as one of the most efficacious means of realising the commandment entrusted to her by Christ: to go teach all nations (Mt. 28:19). That was the reason for the rise of the "didascalia" of the first centuries of the Christian era; the flowering of the cathedral schools and the abbey schools, and of the *studia generalia* of the high Middle Ages; and, in most recent times, the creation of the first universities, such as those at Bologna, Paris, Oxford, etc.

Many of those universities, founded by the Church either because of the Protestant Reformation or by the decision of the various nation states, no

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longer have ties to the Church. Today, however, there is a new generation of Catholic universities (945 of them, to be found throughout the whole world) and of universities and faculties of ecclesiastical studies (159). These centres of higher education have the task of achieving "as it were, a public, persistent, and universal presence in the whole enterprise of advancing higher culture" (*Gravissimum educationis*, 10).

In my talk, I should like to refer in a particular way to universities and faculties of ecclesiastical studies, that is to say, ecclesiastical faculties.

In 1929, Pius XI, called the "Pope of studies," formed a commission of experts charged with preparing academic legislation for all institutions of ecclesiastical higher education. The commission laboured for over two years and, in 1931, *Deus scientiarum Domus* was published.

That the Church had to take a clear stance and formulate a uniform academic legislation for all her ecclesiastical faculties was necessitated by various factors: the development of the natural sciences in the 19th Century with their impact on the Sacred Sciences; the desire of many Church scholars to embrace the findings of such sciences and employ the scientific method in the Sacred Sciences; the new interest in ethnology; the comparative sciences applied to the world's different religions and to Biblical studies; the advancement of literary criticism; the evolution of studies into the life of Jesus; and so on. Moreover, there were some ecclesiastical centres that were ahead of their time,

where there was the fervour of advanced and innovative scientific research; but there were also many sclerotic institutions that only lived a tradition that was lacking in scientific activity.

Many ecclesiastical faculties did not have a perceptible aim, or rather, their aim was merely to grant academic degrees to allow their students easier access to some career position. Such faculties lacked the methodology proper to a university or to research, and often one could not distinguish them from seminaries. The students could enrol without any previous academic preparation, and the time required to earn an academic degree was extremely brief. Academic rigour was absent, and obtaining degrees was very easy. Moreover, ecclesiastical faculties differed profoundly from region to region.

Deus scientiarum Dominus intended to counter all these difficulties. Thus, it set out exactly what was an ecclesiastical faculty's aim and scientific method, and how it should be organised. The document also clearly specified all the relevant details of a practical nature, such as the selection of teachers and students, the curriculum of studies, the exams and the academic degrees. Local differences were to be appropriately taken into consideration in the *Statuta* that every faculty was bound to draw up and send to the Sacred Congregation for examination and approval.

The norms of *Deus scientiarum Dominus* remained in force until 1979, although they were updated after the Council with the *Normae quaedam*.

2. The "*Normæ quædam*"

With its declaration *Gravissimum educationis*, the Second Vatican Council faced the question of Christian education, with particular reference to the importance of Catholic schools, Catholic universities, and ecclesiastical universities and faculties. The declaration formally pronounced that ecclesiastical universities and faculties had to re-draft their constitutions, so as to be able to adopt modern methods and textbooks (*Gravissimum educationis*, 1).

From 1931 to 1965, there were revolutionary changes in the sciences, and in ecclesiastical studies, too, there was a profound evolution. There was an across-the-board development of the human sciences and historical thought, which in turn influenced dogmatic theology, moral theology, the theology of earthly realities, and the theology of the laity. People began to devote more time to Patrology and the history of dogmas. There was the growth in the study of exegesis, of ecumenism, and of the role of non-Christian religions. Finally, there was also the liturgical renewal.

In such a climate, the Congregation for Catholic Education had the task of preparing new ecclesiastical academic legislation. The world's ecclesiastical faculties took part in this work of preparation right from its inception, furnishing full and detailed replies to the Congregation's letter asking for proposals for the revision of *Deus scientiarum Dominus*. This continuous dialogue and close collaboration between the Congregation and the ecclesiastical faculties produced the conclusion that it would be impossible to draft a new Apostolic

Constitution immediately. One reason was that the university, as an institution, was going through a very difficult time. The university revolutions of 1968, which started in California, subsequently affected many countries. Indeed, the very idea of the university was put in doubt. In such a climate, it was felt prudent to publish transitional, provisional laws, called the *Normæ quædam* (1968) which were to update *Deus scientiarum Dominus*. The earlier document, however, continued to have validity for those sections that were not reformed.

"There are four principles that have guided the drafting of these provisional Norms: 1) Fidelity to the Second Vatican Council, which, in several of its documents, dealt with matters pertaining to ecclesiastical studies; 2) The participation of all those who make up the university in the life of ecclesiastical universities and faculties; 3) The affirmation of appropriate freedom of research and teaching; 4) The invitation to ecclesiastical universities and faculties to collaborate among themselves and with existing civil academic centres *in loco*" (Cf. Booklet of the *Normæ quædam*, 10-11).

The *Normæ quædam* insisted on:

The inseparable relationship between teaching and research as the goal of ecclesiastical faculties, with the addition of a more markedly pastoral objective;

An emphasis on a collegial management within the faculties;

The creation of three cycles of studies: the basic (institutional) level, the level of specialisation, and the level of scientific research;

A greater attention to specific regional needs. There was also a strong invitation to collaborate with the civil universities;

A study plan within the faculties, with an indication of the means to be used to realise it

On 1 June 1975, the Congregation invited the ecclesiastical universities and faculties to give their detailed judgement on the *Normæ quædam*, based on their experience and with a view to preparing the future Apostolic Constitution. There were various meetings of experts, and of delegates from ecclesiastical universities and faculties. It was the delegates' congress of November 1976 that set out the essential elements of the new Constitution.

3. The Apostolic Constitution “*Sapientia christiana*”

After long and patient study, many conferences, congresses, and Plenary Meetings of the Congregation for Catholic Education, and after continuous dialogue with the 124 centres affected, Cardinal Garrone presented the definitive text on 17 April 1978 to Pope Paul VI. A few days later, the Pope let it be known that he was perfectly in accord with the document and that he would publish it on the date agreed: 29 June 1978.

However, there were difficulties in translating the document into the various languages, and so the date was postponed to 15 August. Paul VI died on 6 August, and so *Sapientia christiana* had to wait until 15 April 1979 to be promulgated by John Paul II, who, as the delegate of the Polish Episcopal Con-

ference, had taken part in the discussions of November 1976 and was aware of the wishes of the experts and of the ecclesiastical academic centres. John Paul II personally made some changes in the text, to underline the importance of the Episcopal Conferences and to express the desire that all seminaries be affiliated to a faculty of theology.

Sapientia christiana was the result of a long process that was “collegial” in character, marked by intense and fruitful collaboration along the lines set out by the Second Vatican Council. Perhaps that is one of the main reasons why the Apostolic Constitution was accepted and put into practice without too many difficulties.

Today, throughout the world, there exist 159 academic centres of ecclesiastical studies that are governed by *Sapientia christiana*.

Sapientia christiana is the *Magna Charta* of ecclesiastical faculties, that is, of those institutions that deal particularly with Christian Revelation and the disciplines connected with it, and which, therefore, are themselves connected with its evangelising mission. For this reason, they are set up directly by the Holy See.

In his discourse of 18 July 1979, Pope John Paul II explained some specific points of *Sapientia christiana*. Over and above defining what an ecclesiastical faculty is, the Constitution helped to order ecclesiastical studies.

It has clearly set out the governing criteria for the individual centres, so as to make all involved responsible for them, and so as to guarantee an

effective, collegial functioning of those same centres.

It has clarified that relationship between the Church's Magisterium and the *iusta libertas in docendo et in investigando*.

It has described the qualities required in the teachers, both relating to their scientific preparation and their testimony of life.

It has introduced a new structure into the curriculum of the faculties.

It has re-issued the call to Theology Faculties to dedicate themselves to a most important area of research: namely, how to translate the Gospel message into legitimate cultural expressions in the various countries.

It has highlighted the dimensions of ecumenism, of mission, and of human promotion, which must be included within the studies of ecclesiastical faculties (Cf. *Seminarium*, 1979, nn. 2-3, pp. 327-8).

In the same discourse, the Holy Father answered the question: what are the reasons for re-ordering ecclesiastical higher studies?

To answer that question, one must keep in mind the Church and her mission: the mission defined by Christ the Lord when He said to the Apostles, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19), "preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).

To announce the Gospel, to teach, means to meet with man in his condition, with human thought that continuously seeks the truth, always in different ways and in different fields. Man asks and awaits a response. To find the authentic response, one that conforms

to reality and which is exact and persuasive, he takes on a search that is at times difficult and unpleasant. The thirst for truth is one of the undeniable expressions of the human spirit.

To announce the Gospel, to teach, means to meet with that voice of the human spirit on various levels, but especially on the highest level, where the search for truth is carried out in a methodical manner, in specialised institutes that serve for researching and for handing on of the results of research, that is to say, for teaching.

Catholic colleges must be places where the evangelisation of the Church meets with the great universal "academic process," which bears fruit with all the conquests of modern science.

At the same time, in these colleges, the Church deepens, continuously consolidates and renews her own knowledge: that which she must hand on to contemporary man as the message of salvation. And she hands on this knowledge, first of all, to those who must, in their turn, hand it on to others faithfully and authentically, and, at the same time, adapted to the needs and questions of modern day generations.

This is an immense labour, one that is both organic and indispensable. May the new Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana* make all those who will take on this labour aware of their duty within the People of God. May it make them aware of their responsibility for the Word of God and for the results of human truth. May it challenge them to give faithful service to that truth" (328-9).

These words of John Paul II indicate to us the fundamental reason why we need a proper, rigorous academic programme in our ecclesiastical faculties. Serious study is an indispensable means for the work of evangelisation. The aim, therefore, is essentially pastoral: it is a service to the proclamation of Christ's message in today's world.

After the publication of *Sapientia christiana*, the Congregation for Catholic Education, on 29 April, 1979, published the *Norms of Application* for the faithful carrying out of the Apostolic Constitution. In the first part, there are the norms common to ecclesiastical universities and faculties; while in the second part, there are the norms particular to the different faculties. After that, there are two appendices that describe the norms for the drafting of the Statutes of a university or faculty, and then list the sectors of ecclesiastical studies that currently exist in the Church.

4. Professors and students

Up to now we have spoken generally about ecclesiastical faculties and their dedication to research and to handing on the truth. Now, I should like to speak more concretely about the professors and students who make up the university community.

Pope John Paul II, in *Sapientia christiana*, in *Pastores dabo vobis*, in his Encyclical *Fides et ratio* and in numerous other documents, discourses and homilies, offers us abundant material to help us understand what should be the basic characteristics of an ecclesiastical faculty's professors and students. The

Holy Father does not waste any opportunity to speak about those characteristics in an unambiguous manner.

Since the faculty "forms a sort of community," all those persons who are part of it must feel that they are jointly responsible for its common good and must contribute to the achievement of the goal of that same community (*Sapientia christiana*, 11 § 1).

A faculty is a community made up of many people and many categories of people – a community that is organised and constituted to achieve common goals in a collaborative manner. A faculty is, above all, a community of professors and students. The professors form a community with the students, and thus together they advance in their search for the truth.

The primary characteristic of a professor or a student, therefore, is the fervent desire to dedicate oneself to searching for the truth, by devoting oneself generously to study.

In the Introduction to *Fides et ratio*, the Holy Father speaks of our journey along the path to discovering the meaning of life and answering the fundamental questions that distinguish the pilgrimage of human existence: who am I? Where do I come from and where am I going to? Why is there evil in the world? What will there be after this life? (cf. *Fides et ratio*, pp. 3-12). The obvious desire to search for the truth is the primary mark of a professor or student.

Ecclesiastical faculties have three aims: to promote scientific research; to impart education at a highly professional level; and to serve both the par-

ticular churches and the Universal Church in the work of evangelisation. To fulfil these aims, ecclesiastical faculties need to devote themselves to serious study, enthusiastic research, scientific rigour, and to creating a joint effort between professors and students.

The central teaching of John Paul II to university professors and students is this: if we want to work for the Church, for the Kingdom of God and for the new evangelisation, we must be people of culture, with a sound, comprehensive, rigorous intellectual formation. We have to be interested in the promotion of men and women, even on the simply natural level. "Man ... is the primary and fundamental way for the Church" (*Redemptor hominis*, 14). The Church cannot remain detached from the needs and motivations, the travails and distresses, the difficulties and the conquests of modern-day culture. For her to be disinterested in or to remain detached from these realities, would be to flee her own responsibilities and would be an act of omission, a *vulnus* to her evangelising mission (cf. discourse *To the Roman ecclesiastical institutes of higher education*, 4 April, 1979).

Saint Thomas Aquinas is, for us, a fine example of this, "not only because of what he taught but also because of the dialogue which he undertook with the Arab and Jewish thought of his time. In an age when Christian thinkers were rediscovering the treasures of ancient philosophy, and more particularly of Aristotle, Thomas had the great merit of giving pride of place to the harmony which exists between faith and reason.

Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, he argued; hence there can be no contradiction between them" (*Fides et ratio*, 43). The professors and students of ecclesiastical faculties have a responsibility to dialogue with modern culture. A theological faculty has to transmit faithfully the *depositum fidei*, and through creative research has to deepen and enrich its understanding and application to the circumstances of each country, region and culture.

5. Inculturation

In this context, one can speak of the theme of inculturation, which has gained widespread attention in recent decades. Father Pedro Arrupe, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, was probably the first to use the term "inculturation" in his letter of 14 May, 1978, to the whole Society, "On inculturation." He defined inculturation as "the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through the elements proper to the culture in question, ... but also becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and re-making it so as to bring about a 'new creation'."

The word "inculturation" appears in a Papal document for the first time in *Catechesi tradendae* (16 October, 1979). Moreover, the Continental Synods in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000 and the resulting Apostolic Exhortations show us the way to apply inculturation. In these documents, we see the prin-

ciples of evangelisation and theological reflection brought to the different cultural situations.

I will concentrate mainly on the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*. The introductory paragraphs outline a detailed cultural analysis of the Asian Continent, noting its great variety of cultures, peoples, and religions, and qualifying the “encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions” as a pressing one. The document cites with approval the long-standing efforts of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences to take an inductive approach, and to promote a three-fold dialogue with peoples, religions, and cultures. It expresses respect for the ancient religious traditions, the profound philosophies, and the wisdom that are characteristic of Asian peoples (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 1-4).

Asian cultures generally demonstrate a rich variety of religious and cultural values, such as “love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry,” family-centredness, compassion, and “a highly developed sense of community” (6). The Asian approach tends to be integrational, “not confrontation and opposition, but complementarity and harmony” (6).

Jesus was born in Asia. “In Jesus Christ, God assumed the features typical of human nature, including a person’s belonging to a particular people and a particular land” (5). Despite this, the Exhortation recognises

the fact that the Church in much of Asia has been considered foreign, “often associated in people’s minds with the colonial powers,” particularly before the Second Vatican Council (9). Nevertheless, “no individual, no culture is impervious to the appeal of Jesus who speaks from the very heart of the human condition” (14). The Holy Spirit has been present as “a hidden power at work in history, guiding it in the ways of truth and goodness” (15), preparing Asian peoples “for full maturity in Christ” (16) and gathering them into unity “with their different customs, resources and talents” (17).

Paragraph 20 of the Exhortation is a particularly rich reflection on inculturated pastoral ministry. An “evocative pedagogy” is recommended, so that Jesus will be presented “with an Asian face,” as the “fulfillment of yearnings expressed in the mythologies and folklore of the Asian peoples” (20). Narrative methods should complement the ontological notions characteristic of European thought “by more relational, historical, and even cosmic perspectives.” Stories, parables and symbols are recognised as particularly effective, together with personal contact. A beautiful list of images of Jesus suggests that he might be presented to Asians as “the Teacher of Wisdom, the Healer, the Liberator, the Spiritual Guide, the Enlightened One, the Compassionate Friend of the Poor,” etc. Thus, the proclamation of the Gospel will “challenge all cultures to rise to new heights of understanding and expression.”

The Exhortation returns in paragraph 21 to the theme of “the test of true inculturation,” reminding us that “evangelization and inculturation are naturally and intimately related to each other,” but that they are not identical. A disastrous split between Gospel and culture was recognised already by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi* as “the drama of our time.” The Church “renews culture from within, but she also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them.” Thus, the various cultures, “when refined and renewed in the light of the Gospel, can become true expressions of the one Christian faith.” The Holy Spirit, already present in some measure in all human cultures, should be the “primary instrument of the inculturation of the Christian faith.” The Church must understand culture first; once she knows and understands it, she can begin “the dialogue of salvation.”

Key areas needing inculturation are listed as theological reflection, liturgy, the proclamation of the Biblical Word, and the style of evangelisation. The two criteria of “compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the faith of the universal Church” are repeated as touchstones for valid inculturation. The Exhortation sees “spirituality and prayer” as “akin to the Asian soul, spirituality and lifestyle.” There are important links between the future of mission and the life of contemplation.

A related theme, the “dialogue of life and heart,” suggests the spirit in which the threefold dialogue with peoples, cultures, and religions needs to

be pursued. This theme is beautifully developed in paragraph 31: “The followers of Christ must have the gentle and humble heart of their Master, never proud, never condescending, as they meet their partners in dialogue (cf. Mt. 11:29).” To this end, “love of others is indispensable. This should result in collaboration, harmony and mutual enrichment.” Holiness of life will count for more than intellectual argument.

An openness to cultural dialogue, therefore, must be part of a serious intellectual formation. In fact, only by means of a human cultural formation can we be prepared to carry out our mission, to give our “creative” contribution to the universal mission of the Church. We need a solid general education, which can become a fertile, receptive *humus* for new seeds, open to fresh developments.

In *Pastores dabo vobis* (51), John Paul II insists on the cultural and intellectual formation of students who are preparing for the priesthood. “The intellectual formation of candidates for the priesthood finds its specific justification in the very nature of the ordained ministry, and the challenge of the ‘new evangelization’ to which our Lord is calling the Church on the threshold of the third millennium shows just how important this formation is.” The Holy Father, quoting the Second Vatican Council, says, “If we expect every Christian to be prepared to make a defence of the faith and to account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt. 3:15), then all the more should candidates for the priesthood and priests have diligent care of the quality of their intellectual for-

mation in their education and pastoral activity. For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should seek an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries" (*Ibidem*). The attitude of religious indifference and mistrust towards the real capacity of reason to reach objective and universal truth, so common today, gives urgency to our need for an excellent level of intellectual formation. Only then, will the evangelisers of the future be able to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in our cultural and scientific context, making it credible and attractive even when challenged by the legitimate demands of human reason. It is not enough to have a good, broad culture of the human reason; we also need a real, proper university-level specialisation which can prepare us to take our part in the creative processes of culture.

John Paul II, in *Pastores dabo vobis* and, especially, in *Fides et ratio*, strongly insists on the study of philosophy and theology. "Philosophy ... leads to a deeper understanding and interpretation of the human person, and of the person's freedom and relationships with the world and with God ... vis-à-vis an extremely widespread cultural situation which emphasizes subjectivism as a criterion and measure of truth. Only a sound philosophy can help ... to develop a reflective awareness of the fundamental relationship that exists between the human spirit and truth, that truth which is revealed to us fully in Jesus Christ" (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 52).

One can never emphasise enough the need for a rich doctrinal preparation, to form the mature personality of the priest. He needs this to be both pastor

and teacher. Such a doctrinal preparation must be integrated into a coherent synthesis, as the Apostolic Constitution on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, *Sapientia christiana*, says. It must be able "to relate human affairs and activities with religious values in a single living synthesis. Under the direction of these values all things are mutually connected for the glory of God and the integral development of the human person, a development that includes both corporal and spiritual well-being" (*Sapientia christiana*, Introduction, I).

In our study and research, we must always refer to the patrimony of the past and to tradition. But this reference should not be understood as precluding the study and critical evaluation of modern and contemporary thought. At the start of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II cried out that we should not be afraid to burst open the doors to Christ. Contemporary thought, too, must continually hear those words. And we must be able to evaluate the expectations of such thought, and verify its striving towards the whole truth.

Although an openness to contemporary thought must be marked by dutiful prudence and necessary discernment, it is important that this openness exist. The Church always looks towards the past, towards tradition, but she also looks towards the future; and she does this by constantly fixing her gaze on high, towards Christ her Lord. It is from on high, in fact, it is from Christ and His Spirit that inspiration, creativity, dynamic force and courage come.

Study, research, and intellectual preparation contain within themselves

an important pedagogical and formative function. They do not simply allow us to store up data, but they help us to master a method of study, so that we are able to carry on the path of personal formation by ourselves (cf. *Discourse to the Pontifical Gregorian University*, 15 December 1979). Intellectual formation helps us mature on the pastoral level too, making us able to enter into dialogue with the mind-set, the needs, the expectations and the language of the people of our time (*ibidem*). It helps us to examine problems calmly and critically, without letting ourselves be influenced by fashionable opinions or ways of thinking.

Saint Charles Borromeo used to exhort his clergy: It is your duty to instruct the minds of the faithful about the mysteries of the Christian life and about the precepts of the divine law; *qua sane ratione fiet, neglectis studiis* (How will it be done if you neglect your studies)? It is your duty, too, to explain effectively the sacraments and their practice; *quo id pacto fiet, neglectis studiis* (How will it be done if you neglect your studies)? And it is up to you to direct consciences, *quonammodo fiet, neglectis studiis* (How will it be done if you neglect your studies)?

Academic preparation and intellectual formation are bound up with, directed towards, and addressed to humanity – to all that makes up the true good of mankind. Study is a gift, not just for the student's maturity and personal formation, but also for everyone else. This relationship *ad alios* belongs to the very essence of the Christian and apostolic vocation.

In his Encyclical *Fides et ratio*, the Holy Father insists on the necessity of a philosophical and theological preparation, and invites philosophers "to recover, in the flow of an enduringly valid philosophical tradition, the range of authentic wisdom and truth – metaphysical truth included – which is proper to philosophical enquiry. They should be open to the impelling questions which arise from the word of God and they should be strong enough to shape their thought and discussion in response to that challenge. Let them always strive for truth, alert to the good which truth contains" (*Fides et ratio*, 106).

John Paul II speaks of a *sapiential* horizon in the search for the truth. In our search for the truth, in our study, all academic, scientific, and technological conquests are placed side by side with philosophical, ethical, theological and apostolic values. "The search for truth, even when it concerns a limited reality of the world or of man, has no confine; it always points towards something that is above the immediate object of study, towards those questions that open up the way to the Mystery" (John Paul II, *Discourse to the University of Krakow*, 8 June 1997).

The Holy Father also addresses theologians, so that they may pay particular attention to the philosophical implications of the Word of God, and carry out their study in such a way that the speculative and practical wealth of theology may emerge. "The intimate bond between theological and philosophical wisdom is one of the Christian tradition's most distinctive treasures in the exploration of revealed truth."

(*Fides et ratio*, 105). By rediscovering the metaphysical dimension of truth, one can enter into a critical and serious dialogue with contemporary philosophical thought and with the whole of the philosophical tradition.

What is the image of the professor or student of an ecclesiastical faculty? Saint Bonaventure describes it to us when he introduces his reader to his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, inviting him to be aware that “one cannot be satisfied with reading without remorse, knowledge without devotion, research without the impulse of wonder, pru-

dence without the ability to abandon oneself to joy, activity divorced from religiosity, knowledge separated from charity, intelligence without humility, study not sustained by divine grace, reflection without the wisdom that is inspired by God” (*Prologus*, 4: *Opera Omnia*, Florence, 1981, t. V, 296).

I hope and pray that all professors and students of the Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion can live up to this ideal, by ever combining the two fundamental traits of a theologian: *eruditio et pietas*.

1. Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth has a history which dates back to July 1926, when the Holy See elevated the Papal Seminary to the status of a Pontifical College with the right and privilege of conferring academic degrees.