



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

Blessing of University Library

Friday, 11 June 1999, Warsaw

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to offer cordial greetings to all those gathered in this long-awaited new building of the Library of the University of Warsaw, to take part in the blessing ceremony. I greet the Cardinal Primate, the Rector Magnificus together with the Senate and Professors of the University, and the Rector-Elect. I am delighted that the Rectors and Professors of other academic institutions of Warsaw are present. I salute the Minister of Education, the members of the Polish Academy of Science and the representatives of the world of culture.

A library is an institution which by its very existence bears witness to the development of culture. It comprises the treasury of written works, in which we see displayed human creativity, human intelligence, knowledge of the world and of human beings, and also the capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity and work for the consolidation of the common good (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 51). In a systematically arranged collection, new books and periodicals are added to old manuscripts and incunabula. The whole becomes an eloquent sign of the unity of successive generations, forging from a variety of times and arguments a common heritage of culture and learning. A library, therefore, is a special temple of the creativity of the human spirit which reflects the Divine Breath which attended the work of the creation of the world and of man. To understand why the Pope is here in this building and why this blessing ceremony is taking place, one must go back precisely to that moment when God made man in his image and likeness, and called him to share in the work of creating goodness and beauty. All of this shows that man responds to that invitation; in a sense, this building looks to the One who is the first Cause of existence. If, therefore, we find ourselves today in this place which gathers together the fruits of man's creative

work, it is right that we look to God filled with thanksgiving. It is right that we seek his blessing upon this building, asking the breath of his Spirit to be present here and to become a source of inspiration for future generations of men and women of culture and learning.

The invitation to the Pope to bless this magnificent building is an eloquent sign that the academic world of the capital views positively the heritage which Christianity has conferred down the centuries upon culture and learning in Poland; it is a sign of appreciation of the timeless value of this heritage, of the desire not only to draw more from it, but also to increase it, bringing to the common treasury of culture the fruits of contemporary study and research. It is a sign in particular of the growing awareness that the Church and the world of learning are natural allies in the service of mankind.

I wish finally to express the hope that this building will be, as the people of the capital expect, the beginning of a rejuvenation of the university quarter of Powisle that will change the face of Warsaw. May this joint effort of State, city and academic authorities produce further fruits, no less magnificent than this building which I have had the opportunity to bless. It is my hope that this Library will become the place where those who profit from its rich resources recognize and satisfy the noble passion of the quest for truth.

God bless you all!