



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE JOHN PAUL II FOUNDATION**

Tuesday, 23 October 2001

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cordially greet all of you, come to Rome to solemnly celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the John Paul II Foundation. I greet Cardinal Franciszek, Metropolitan of Kraków, and all the Archbishops and Bishops present here. I greet the Council of the Foundation with its president Archbishop Szczepan Wesoly, the directors of the single institutions of the Foundation, as well as the presidents and members of the Circle of the Friends of the Foundation who come from Belgium, Denmark, France, Indonesia, Spain, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Poland, Singapore, the United States of America, Sweden, Venezuela and Great Britain. I am delighted to have you as guests today.

When I established the Foundation 20 years ago, I wanted it to undertake a wide range of activity: cultural, scientific, social and pastoral. I wanted an environment to be created that would support and further the bonds between the Apostolic See and the Polish nation, and that would look after the propagation of the patrimony of Christian culture and of the Magisterium of the Church throughout the world. I foresaw that the Foundation would take on the far-seeing work of gathering documentation regarding the pontificate and spread the pontifical and magisterial teaching of the Church. The second task was to be the promotion of Christian culture through the networking and collaboration with Polish and international scientific and artistic centres, in addition to offering educational opportunities to young people, particularly those from Eastern-Central Europe. The seat of the Foundation was to be the Polish House on the Via Cassia, Rome. It was to become "a tangible point traced at the crossroads ... of all the cultures ... in the wider, spiritual, ethnic and cultural sense ... but also, in a way, [of] the whole Church and Christian culture of the whole world" (cf. *Special Audience for Polish pilgrims on their presentation of "John Paul II" House, 7 Nov.*

1981).

If today, after 20 years, I return to this premise, I do so because in reference to it, it seems to me that I can already attempt an evaluation of the Foundation's activity. It is an easy task. Every year the Council of the Foundation presented me with a detailed report of all that it had done. So I am informed that, thanks to the initiatives of 36 Circles of Friends of the Foundation in 14 countries and thanks to the generosity of thousands of men of good will throughout the world, a fund has been created, that guarantees the functioning of four important institutions: the Polish House in Rome, the Centre for Documentation of the Pontificate, the Institute of Christian Culture, and the House of the John Paul II Foundation in Lublin. I also know that the House of Rome offers a considerable organizational and pastoral help to pilgrims who arrive in Rome. The Centre for Documentation of the Pontificate is becoming a real center of information regarding not only the activity and teaching of the Pope, but also the life of the Church in the complex reality of today's world, in the span of the last 23 years. The Polish House and the Center for Documentation form a material and spiritual base for the activity of the Institute of Christian Culture in Rome. It fosters contacts with the scientific and artistic sectors in Poland and in the world. On one hand it works to sustain the memory of the Christian roots of our culture, on the other it takes on the task of forming an élite, who will transmit this Christian spirit to succeeding generations in Europe and on other continents. Through the so-called "Summer University" the youth of the whole world have the possibility of knowing the history which gave birth to the Christian tradition and the current situation of the Church and of the world, in which this tradition finds its continuity.

The most outstanding of all these initiatives is the fund for scholarships for young people from Central and Eastern Europe and from other countries of the ex-Soviet Union. To my knowledge, more than 170 graduates have graduated from the Foundation's welcome House in Lublin. After having completed their studies in various faculties of the Catholic University of Lublin and of other Polish universities, they have returned to their countries and have become zealous promoters of science and culture solidly based on perennial values. Another 145 students continue their studies. Recently I hosted them here and came to know them personally. This work is invaluable! Whosoever invests in the human person, in his overall development, never loses. The results of this investment are imperishable.

If the Foundation, after 20 years of activity, can say *exegi monumentum*, it is precisely with a view to shaping a spiritual monument in the hearts and minds of people, of environments and of whole societies, continually, and without noise. There is no monument of our time, more magnificent and enduring, than this one, forged in the bronze of science and culture.

My thank you goes to all who in the span of these 20 years have in any way supported the activity of the Foundation and to those who guide this activity with wisdom and dedication. Please do not cease this good work; may it continue to develop. May the common effort sustained by the help of God continue to produce abundant fruit.

I thank you for having come to this meeting. God bless you!

To English-speaking supporters

My greeting goes also to those of you who are from English-speaking parts of the world. To you who are committed to supporting the ideals and work of the *John Paul II Foundation* I express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude. What you are involved in is nothing less than the passing on of our Christian heritage to future generations, by making better known important elements of the culture that has fed and nourished the Polish spirit in its constant search for excellence. Much has been done in the 20 years of the Foundation's existence. I am especially happy at what has been achieved in the vital realm of helping the education and training of men and women who will bear the imprint of a wisdom and human experience that the world urgently needs.

You, the Friends of the Foundation, come from many countries. You are as it were a sign of the universality of the truths and values of our heritage. They are universal because they are deeply imbued with the Gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ. May the Lord Jesus sustain you and your families in the gift of faith received through that heritage! Thank you.