



Mens verblind door techniek

Toespraak op de Katholieke Universiteit “Del Sacro Cuore” bij gelegenheid van de 50ste verjaardag van de “Agostino Gemelli” faculteit voor geneeskunde en chirurgie.



Paus Benedictus XVI
3 mei 2012

Lord Cardinals, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and Priesthood, Illustrious Pro-Rector, Distinguished Authorities, Docents, Doctors, Distinguished Health and University Staff, Dear Students and Dear Patients!

With particular joy I meet with you today to celebrate the 50 years of the foundation of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of the “Agostino Gemelli” Polyclinic. I thank the President of the Toniolo Institute, Cardinal Angelo Scola, and the Pro-Rector, Professor Franco Anelli, for the courteous words they addressed to me. I greet the Lord President of the Chamber, The Honorable Gianfranco Fini, the Lord Ministers, the Honorable Lorenzo Ornaghi and Honorable Renato Balduzzi, the numerous Authorities, as well as the Docents, the Doctors, the Staff and the Students of the Polyclinic and of the Catholic University. A special thought goes to you, dear patients.

In this circumstance I would like to offer some reflections. Ours is a time in which the experimental sciences have transformed the vision of the world and the very self-understanding of man. The many discoveries, the innovative technologies that succeed one another at a feverish rhythm, are reasons for motivated pride, but often they are not lacking in disquieting implications. In fact, projected on the background of the widespread optimism of scientific learning, is the shadow of a crisis of thought. Rich in means but not as much in ends, the man of our time often lives conditioned by reductionism and relativism, which lead to losing the meaning of things; almost dazzled by technical efficiency, he forgets the fundamental horizon of the question of meaning, thus relegating the transcendent dimension to irrelevance. On this background, thought becomes weak and an ethical impoverishment also gains ground, which clouds the normative references of value. What was the fertile European root of culture and progress seems to be forgotten. In it, the search for the absolute — the *quaerere Deum* — included the need to study further the natural sciences, the whole world of learning (cf. Address to the College of Bernardins of Paris, Sept. 12, 2008). In fact, scientific research and the question of meaning, also in their specific epistemological and methodological physiognomy, spring from only one source, the Logos that presides over the work of creation and guides the intelligence of history. An essential techno-practical mentality generates a risky imbalance between what is technically possible and what is morally good, with unforeseeable consequences.

Hence it is important that culture rediscover the meaning and dynamism of transcendence, in a word, that it open with determination the horizon of the *quaerere Deum*. The well-known Augustinian phrase comes to mind “You have created us for yourself [Lord], and our heart is restless until it rests in You” (The Confessions, I,1). It can be said that the very impulse to scientific research springs from nostalgia for God, who dwells in the human heart: at bottom, the man of science tends, even unconsciously, to reach that truth that can give meaning to life. However, no matter how passionate and tenacious human research is, it is not capable, on its own, to come to a safe conclusion, because “man is not able to clarify completely the strange faint light that rests on the question of the eternal realities ... God must take the initiative to come to meet us and to address man” (J.



Ratzinger, Benedict's Europe in the Crisis of Cultures, Cantagalli, Rome, 2005, 124; Zenit translation). To restore to reason its native, integral dimension, it is necessary then to rediscover the source that scientific research shares with the search of faith, *fides quaerens intellectum*, in keeping with Anselm's intuition. Science and faith have a fecund reciprocity, almost a complementary need of the intelligence of the real. However, the *quaerere Deum* of man would be lost in a confusion of paths if he was not met by a way of illumination and sure orientation, which is that of God himself who comes close to man with immense love: "In Jesus Christ God not only speaks to man but also seeks him out [...] It is a search which begins in the heart of God and culminates in the Incarnation of the Word." (John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 7).

A religion of the Logos, Christianity does not relegate faith to the realm of the irrational, but attributes the origin and meaning of reality to a creative Reason, which in the crucified God manifested itself as love and which invites us to undertake the path of the *quaerere Deum*: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Saint Thomas Aquinas comments here: "The point of arrival of this way is, in fact, the end of human desire. Now man desires two things primarily: in the first place, that knowledge of truth which is proper to his nature. In the second place, permanence in being, the common property of all things. One and the other are found in Christ. Hence, if you seek to know where to go, receive Christ because he is the way" (*Esposizioni su Giovanni*, chapter 14, lectio 2). Therefore, the Gospel of life illumines man's arduous way, and in face of the temptation to absolute autonomy, it reminds that "man's life comes from God; it is his gift, his image and imprint, a sharing in his breath of life" (John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 39). And it is precisely by following the way of faith that man is able to discern in the very realities of suffering and death that cut across his existence, a genuine possibility of goodness and life. In the Cross of Christ he recognizes the Tree of life, revelation of the passionate love of God for man. The care of those who suffer is then a daily encounter with the face of Christ, and the dedication of the intelligence and the heart is a sign of the mercy of God and of his victory over death.

Lived in its integrality, research is illumined by science and faith, and from these two "wings" it draws impulse and outburst, without ever losing the rightful humility, the sense of its own limit. In this way the search for God becomes fecund for the intelligence, ferment of culture, promoter of true humanism, a search that does not stop on the surface. Dear friends, allow yourselves always to be guided by the wisdom that comes from above, by a learning illumined by faith, remembering that wisdom calls for passion and the effort of research.

Inserted here is the irreplaceable task of the Catholic University, a place in which the educational relationship is placed at the service of the person in the construction of a qualified scientific competence, rooted in a patrimony of learning that the change of generations has distilled in wisdom of life; a place in which the relationship of care is not a job but a mission; where the charity of the Good Samaritan is the first chair, and the face of suffering man the very Face of Christ: "you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). In its daily work of research, teaching and study, the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart lies in this tradition which expresses its own potential for innovation: no progress, much less so on the cultural plane, is nourished by mere repetition, instead, it calls for an ever new beginning. Moreover, it requires that willingness to confront and dialogue that opens the intelligence and attests to the rich fecundity of the patrimony of the faith. Thus shape is given to a solid personality structure, where Christian identity penetrates daily living and is expressed from within an excellent professionalism.

The Catholic University, which has a particular relationship with the See of Peter, is called today to be an exemplary institution which does not restrict learning to the functionality of economic success, but widens the extension of the project in which the gift of intelligence investigates and develops the gifts of the created world, exceeding a productive and utilitarian vision of existence, because "the human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension" (*Caritas in veritate*, 34). In fact this combination of scientific research and unconditional service to life delineates the Catholic physiognomy of the "Agostino



Gemelli" Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, because the perspective of faith is interior — not superimposed or juxtaposed — to the acute and tenacious search of learning.

A Catholic Faculty of Medicine is the place where transcendent humanism is not a rhetorical slogan, but a rule lived by daily dedication. Dreaming of an authentic Catholic Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Father Gemelli – and with him so many others, such as Professor Brasca — put at the center of care the human person in his fragility and greatness, in the ever new resources of a passionate research and no less awareness of the limit and mystery of life. This is why you wished to institute a new Athenaeum Center for life, which supports other already existing realities, such as, for example, the Paul VI International Scientific Institute. Therefore, I encourage care of life in all its phases.

I would now like to turn to all the patients present here at the "Gemelli," to assure them of my prayer and affection and to tell them that they will always be followed with love so that in their faces, the suffering face of Christ is reflected.

It is in fact the love of God, which shines in Christ, which renders acute and penetrating the look of research and to grasp what no research is able to grasp. Blessed Giuseppe Toniolo had this very present, who affirmed how it is of man's nature to read in others the image of God-love and his imprint on creation. Without love, science also loses its nobility. Love alone guarantees the humanity of research. Thank you for your attention.