

yond our grasp. We can seek it and draw near to it, but we cannot completely possess it; or put better, truth possesses us and inspires us.”¹⁶

As St. Josemaria liked to say, humility is the truth,¹⁷ and therefore it is an indispensable virtue for all those with the mission of cooperating in the spread of truth. Let us ask for this gift from Jesus, truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, when we go to greet him in the Tabernacle, where he presides over this institution, and we will have the assurance of being firmly rooted in him.

Let us invoke our Lord, and also go to our Mother Holy Mary, *Sedes Sapientiae*, so that she make us humble but efficacious collaborators of her Son in the spread of the truth, throughout this academic year 2011-2012, which I now declare inaugurated.

Honorary Doctorates Awarded by the University of Navarra

October 27, 2011

Distinguished authorities,
Faculty members and students,
Ladies and gentlemen:

The reception into our academic family of three well-known figures as honorary doctors is today a new motive of joy and hope for the University of Navarra. Besides experiencing a deep and sincere joy on recognizing their high merits, the academic community is greatly inspired in seeing, as on previous occasions, that these eminent academic figures (from three very important fields of knowledge) have brought light to many people with their outstanding and diligent work.

The three new doctors, each within his own specialty, share a common feature: their deep bond to the university world.

The painter Antonio López, member of the Royal Academy of San Fernando, is one of the leading representatives of contemporary realism in Spain, and the “father” of the hyper-realistic school of Madrid. He studied in the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts and traveled to Italy, the goal of so many great

16. Ibid.

17. See Letter January 9, 1932, no. 90; Letter August 8, 1956, no. 5. The phrase is from St. Teresa of Avila.

artists in the past. His work is marked by an acute sense of being a researcher of reality, an attitude which enables him to readily recognize the imprint of God in creatures. Since 2006 he has directed the workshop of figurative painting at the University of Navarre, where he has helped give shape to the artistic vocation of many promising young people.

Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and President of the European Bishops' Council, is a clear example of the opening of the mind to the knowledge of reality in its most disparate aspects. A doctor in theology and in canon law, fields in which he has been a professor at the Esztergom-Budapest seminary, he is a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science and of various Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, to which he has contributed his deep knowledge as a canonist and theologian. Cardinal Erdő's life is closely linked to the academic community: he was Rector of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, of which he is currently Chancellor, and has taught Canon Law at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, in Rome.

Professor Joseph Weiler, in turn, is an outstanding expert in the law of the European Union. With extensive ties to the worldwide academic community, he has studied and worked at the universities of Cambridge, Florence, Michigan, Harvard, Singapore and Copenhagen, among others we could mention. Currently he is a full Professor at New York University, as well as a member of the

American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the author of numerous thought-provoking publications.

The unblemished professionalism of the three new doctors offers us the opportunity to reflect on the task of forming young people and on the effort to broaden the frontiers of human knowledge. The first chancellor of this Alma Mater insisted that the university institution, in order to be fruitful, must first of all never be content with mediocre goals, but aspire *ad maiora*, to the highest realities, to the broadest horizons.

Indeed, on turning its glance upon itself, the university discovers that the lights and shadows of today's world reflect the task it is called to confront. This panorama brings with it the requirement to exercise a responsible influence upon our own times. And given the challenges that today's world presents, it calls for a sharpening of one's vision and a redoubling of one's efforts, doing so always with a positive spirit. As is the case with this university, this effort is also always grounded on the exercise of the human and Christian virtues.

The values an Alma Mater strives to embody can be summed up in those envisioned by the *universitas studiorum* right from its beginning, more than seven centuries ago. The daring goal of bringing into harmony the basic fields of human knowledge is an arduous one, best served by the interchange of knowledge among professors and students in their joint striving for the truth.

The *universitas studiorum* entails the “joining together of teachers and students in the ardent search for wisdom.”¹

We could ask ourselves where the inspiration for such an ambitious goal comes from, an endeavor that has transformed the face of the earth, making it more unified and more human. Among the various and valuable contributions from which the university has benefited, we need to highlight the light-bringing power of Christianity. History bears abundant testimony to the fact that the university was born in the heart of the Church, without which what today we understand as modernity would not exist.

The present-day world is certainly full of challenges. As in earlier periods that were no less difficult, the academic community cannot turn its back on this world of ours, which would be a grave lack of responsibility. Rather it has to courageously confront the various challenges present today, stirring up motives for hope.

“But where,” Pope Benedict XVI asked during the recent World Youth Day, “will young people encounter those reference points in a society which is increasingly confused and unstable? At times one has the idea that the mission of a university professor nowadays is exclusively that of forming competent and efficient professionals capable of satisfy-

ing the demand for labor at any given time. One also hears it said that the only thing that matters at the present moment is pure technical ability. This sort of utilitarian approach to education is in fact becoming more widespread, even at the university level, promoted especially by sectors outside the university. All the same, you who, like myself, have had an experience of the university, and now are members of the teaching staff, surely are looking for something more lofty and capable of embracing the full measure of what it is to be human. We know that when mere utility and pure pragmatism become the principal criteria, much is lost and the results can be tragic: from the abuses associated with a science which acknowledges no limits beyond itself, to the political totalitarianism which easily arises when one eliminates any higher reference than the mere calculus of power. The authentic idea of the university, on the other hand, is precisely what saves us from this reductionist and curtailed vision of humanity.”²

By sincerely pursuing a renewed eagerness for the truth, we will recuperate the optimism proper to the seeker of wisdom, who strives to decipher the enigmas hidden in the intelligible structures of reality and refuses to remain on the surface of questions. Thus we will help prevent the scattering of knowledge among specialties that are ever more narrow and isolated, as though alien to each

1. Alphonse the Wise, *Siete Partidas*, Book II, title XXXI.

2. Benedict XVI, Address at meeting with young university teachers during World Youth Day, August 19, 2011.

other, and reinforce the universal reach of human knowledge. To confront this centrifugal dynamic that leads to disintegration, an interdisciplinary dialogue once again is shown to be indispensable for innovative research.

Only the sapiential approach to nature, to society, and to the human person, to the truth of man's origin and destiny, can offer a solid foundation for the education of the new generations who crowd the classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The years that these young people spend in their Alma Mater are decisive for the formation of their intellect and personality. While carefully respecting the students' freedom, the professors, as I have already stressed, need to enter into personal dialogue with the students, and also among themselves, to broaden cultural horizons and overcome so many moral perplexities in a society that—if people fail to react—finds itself on the verge of losing all its ethical bearings. Far from offering a protective haven, the university has to contribute to strengthening young people's resolve, so that they confront courageously—now and in the future—the challenge of building a society that is freer, more creative and more united: more Christian. This hope-filled panorama will foster an optimistic and affirmative outlook facing the future.

In addition, the university needs to offer an environment marked by openness to the universal, an attitude that has been present in the aca-

demic milieu from its very beginning. The meeting of teachers and students from many different backgrounds and with quite diverse mentalities enriches the university family. By broadening their vision of the world, this permanent dialogue prepares the new generations to work in a global world, which needs to learn how to overcome misunderstandings and prejudices. The university thus becomes a school of peace and mutual understanding, helping to calm passions and uproot violence.

As the founder of the University of Navarra, St. Josemaría Escrivá, insisted: "This world of ours will be saved—allow me to remind you—not by those who aim to drug the life of the spirit by reducing everything to a matter of economics or material well-being, but by those who have faith in God and in man's eternal destiny, and who have received the truth of Christ as a light to guide their actions and conduct. Because the God of our faith is not a distant God who contemplates man's lot with indifference. He is a Father who loves his children ardently, a Creator who overflows with affection for his creatures, and grants human beings the great privilege of being able to love him, and thus transcend all that is ephemeral and transitory."³

In place of giving in to merely pragmatic goals, the university should constantly set forth on the search for truth, a path marked out by a love for the good and the beautiful. Although, in the short run, the

3. St. Josemaría, Address at the ceremony of investment of honorary doctorates, May 9, 1974.

attainment of immediate and limited results may seem profitable, the unconditional striving for transcendental values—for truth, goodness and beauty—has shown itself to always be fruitful. Here we find the key to the integral formation of young personalities, which the Founder entrusted to the University of Navarra as its mission.

Passion for the truth overcomes the temptation of relativism, which imposes as its norm of conduct whatever is most pleasing to each person at a given moment. This selfish individualism is the most distant attitude possible from the authentic commitment the university should foster. For just as the truth is the antidote to subjective opinion, openness to the good prevails over opportunistic self-interest, and the delight in beauty far surpasses merely emotional sentimentalism.

University education has to be forged on a deep vision of the human being. An anthropology open to transcendence requires the contribution of the various disciplines, with special emphasis on the humanities. The cultivation and teaching of theology and philosophy helps to ensure that the university is not reduced to a superficial search for information,

but rather aspires to attain a balanced and complete vision of the person, while at the same time giving all due value to the applied sciences, which are always indispensable.

In its endeavor to form competent professionals, higher education does not try to provide its graduates with a merely selfish advantage, but to enable them to serve society more fruitfully. It does so by fostering the eagerness to know the truth, enthusiasm for cutting-edge research, a positive and constructive concern to build a more just society.

Young people at the university look to the example of those who have already advanced far on the path of knowledge and service. And they see that—even in an historical moment as complex as our own—it is possible to attain a high professional level through hard work while preserving a great respect for ethical values. Therefore we offer each of the three new doctors *honoris causa* our most sincere congratulations and gratitude for the shining example of their outstanding career in the search for truth, beauty and goodness. And we entrust the efforts of everyone at the University of Navarra to the protection of our Lady, Mother of Fairest Love.