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The Faculty of Theology in Krakow and the Jesuits. A Brief Introduction

Last year, we celebrated the 625th anniversary of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow. On this occasion, the authorities of the Jagiellonian University and the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow organized a conference devoted to the tradition and heritage of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow. Ignatianum University in Cracow also joined the momentous event as a host of a publication on this topic, by lending the pages of *Perspectives on Culture*, one of its leading academic journals, for this purpose.

The history of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow began with the bull of Pope Boniface IX promulgated on January 11, 1397, which included the decision to establish another – then the fourth – faculty in the Studium Generale, which had been founded in 1364. From its inception, the Faculty of Theology in Krakow was vitally important to the history and culture of Poland. First, its origins were connected with King Jadwiga of Anjou and her husband Ladislaus Jagiello, who played a groundbreaking role for the next centuries of joint Polish–Lithuanian history. Secondly, the influence of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow, as well as its graduates, on the culture and history of Poland, but also of Europe, has been invaluable at many levels, including for Christianization.

The Society of Jesus also has its place in the history of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow, paradoxically due to the dispute, a very sharp dispute at times, that erupted between the Jesuits, who arrived in Poland in the second half of the 16th century, and the professors of University of Krakow, who feared the loss of their position and educational monopoly due to competition from free Jesuit education. Not surprisingly, before the Jesuits established their house in Krakow, they already had five colleges in Poland: in Braniewo (1564), Pułtusk (1565), Vilnius (1569), Poznań (1571) and Jarosław (1574). These schools – which were very far from

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Krakow – effectively drew young people away from studying at the University of Krakow, which caused concern among Krakow professors. It was only through the efforts of Antonio Possevino SJ, who was not only one of the most prominent figures in the history of the Society of Jesus, but also a brilliant diplomat and organizer, that Pope Gregory XIII appointed a special Jesuit papal mission (1579), one of whose tasks was to persuade the hostile rectors of the colleges of the University of Krakow of the real motives of the Jesuits, who did not intend to diminish the role of the city's already existing university by their presence in Krakow. Finally, on February 1, 1583, the Jesuits received a document from Bishop Piotr Myszkowski that granted them the use of St. Barbara's Church in Krakow. Subsequently, Possevino himself, who as papal legate was staying briefly in the Republic at the time, personally took possession of the temple for the order (on February 7, 1583). Several decades later, the Bishop of Krakow Marcin Szyszkowski granted the Jesuits the right to open a school of humanities, theology and philosophy (1622), and the following year King Sigismund III Vasa proclaimed the college's charter of erection. Of course, this did not calm the situation, but flared up the dispute anew, from which Krakow University eventually emerged victorious. In March 1634, Pope Urban VIII ordered the closure of the College of the Society of Jesus in Krakow, which finally closed on June 28 of that year, with the Jesuits allowed to educate only their own monks. Despite these tumultuous relations with Krakow's professors, in the centuries that followed the history of the Jesuits was linked to Krakow and its people. This was true even despite the decades-long absence of the Society of Jesus in Krakow, associated with the order's suppression in 1773. The Jesuits returned to Krakow in 1867 and became permanently engrained in the religious, cultural, as well as didactic and scientific landscape of the "City of the Kings of Poland," one manifestation of which today is Ignatianum University in Cracow.

It should be added – something that is particularly important in retrospect – that the rivalry between the University of Krakow and the Jesuits was not an attempt to break the educational monopoly of Poland's oldest university, but was tied to the accessibility of education itself, as well as the values and patterns of behavior that the Society of Jesus transmitted. Today, the staff and students of the Ignatianum University in Cracow, the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, as well as the Jagiellonian University carry out many joint scientific, didactic and organizational projects, thus demonstrating the ideas, values and goals that unite them.

Meanwhile, returning to the recent history of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow, it should be noted that, like the Jesuit college in Krakow a few centuries earlier, this faculty also had a troubled history. In 1954, the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, despite centuries of heritage

and tradition, removed the Faculty of Theology from Jagiellonian University and incorporated it into the structures of the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw. Admittedly, thanks to the resistance of the academic staff, the Faculty of Theology remained in Krakow, focusing on the education of seminarians, but the decision of the communist authorities permanently separated theological studies from the oldest Polish university. In the following years, the legal status of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow was formulated: in 1959, a decree of the Holy See established its final legal status, and in 1974 it was given the title “Pontifical.” In 1981, it became Papal Theological Academy in Krakow, and then in 2009, it was transformed into Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow.

This volume of *Perspectives on Culture* includes studies on the history and role of the Faculty of Theology first of the University of Krakow and later of Jagiellonian University. There is no doubt that they do not exhaust the issues related to the Faculty of Theology in Krakow as they bring not only new findings, but also encourage further research in the future.

While congratulating you on the achievements to date, we wish the staff and students of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow, as well as the entire Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, on the occasion of the anniversary, further fruitful development and success in fulfilling the teaching and research mission, as well as satisfaction from working and studying at the Pontifical University.

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