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625th Anniversary of the Founding of the Faculty
of Theology, 180th Anniversary of the Birth
of Józef Sebastian Pelczar and 140th Anniversary
of His Election as the Rector of the Jagiellonian University

We have had the privilege of celebrating a unique month in modern history, as on January 11, 2022, we held a grand ceremony to honor the 625th anniversary of the foundation of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow by Pope Boniface IX through the bull *Eximiae devotionis affectus* of January 11, 1397, at the request of Queen Jadwiga and her husband King Ladislaus Jagiello. Today (January 17, 2022) marks exactly 180 years since the birth (on January 17, 1842) of the Rector of the Jagiellonian University, Bishop Józef Sebastian Pelczar, who was also elected rector of the Jagiellonian University 140 years ago (1882–1883). The history of the Faculty of Theology has seen many outstanding theologians, just to mention the saints: Jan of Kęty and Stanisław Kazimierczyk. We can also list many others, such as Konstanty Michalski, Jan Fijałek, Tadeusz Glemma or Władysław Wicher, who were committed to the quest for truth and sought to unfold the mystery of God throughout the centuries of the faculty's existence, first at Jagiellonian University and today at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow.

We arrive at the Alma Mater of all Polish universities and kiss the hand of the Mother in order to return to the sources and seek unity and community, to seek the truth together and carry out the ministry of thinking. To learn, following in the footsteps of a student of this Faculty of Theology, an honorary Doctor of the Jagiellonian University and patron of the Pontifical University – John Paul II – who, 25 years ago, on the 600th anniversary of the Faculty of Theology, addressed the academic community, saying that the university is like a mother whose “concern is spiritual: that of giving birth to souls for the sake of knowledge, wisdom, the shaping of minds and hearts.” And that this is “a service unmatched by anything else” (John Paul II, *Speech delivered on the occasion of the six hundredth anniversary of the Faculty of Theology of Jagiellonian University*, Krakow, June 8, 1997).

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I would like to thank the Honorable Prof. Jacek Popiel, Rector of the Jagiellonian University, for the opportunity to organize a conference in the Auditorium of the Collegium Novum. I also express my gratitude to the Congregation of the Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, headed by Mother Olga Podsadnia, for inspiration and cooperation; to Fr. Prof. Dr. Jacek Urban, Dean of the Faculty of History and Cultural Heritage of the Pontifical University, for the scientific preparation of the event; and to Prof. Dr. Stanisław Sroka, Dean of the Faculty of History of the Jagiellonian University, for chairing the conference. I would like to thank the speakers for their presentations, and our University's JP2TV Television for the broadcasts. I also wish to express my thanks to the magnificent journal *Perspectives on Culture* for including all the valuable scholarly papers in this widely read periodical; it is an honor and an obligation.

In his letter to the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow on the occasion of the jubilee of the Faculty of Theology, Pope Francis wrote:

Faithful to the centuries-old tradition, read the signs of the times, take up new challenges with courage to effectively bring the truth of the Gospel to modern people and the world. May your University be a place where new generations of Christians are molded, not only through academic research and the pursuit of truth, but also through the social testimony of living the faith. May it be a community in which learning is combined with promoting respect for each person for the sake of God who created them and with concern for shaping hearts and opening them to what is most important, what is lasting, and what does not pass away (Pope Francis, *Letter on the occasion of the 625th anniversary of the Faculty of Theology in Krakow*, January 6, 2022).

May these words be an inspiration to all of us for the next years of the existence and activities of the Theological Faculty, our Universities, as well as for us individually.

I wish all of us to heed the lessons of history and theology and to dedicate ourselves to creative pursuits in the future. To all readers, I hope you will peruse and enjoy the outstanding texts, which are a true ministry of thinking in today's reality.

Fr. Prof. Robert Tyrła
Rector of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow
January 17, 2022