

Greetings of Fr F. Lombardi on the occasion of the annual festival of the University of Torun and the first awarding of the “Reason and Hope” Prize (Torun, 19/02/2020)

Magnificent Rector Professor Andrzej Tretyn, Excellencies, Magnificents Rectors, Civil Ecclesiastical and Academic Authorities, Dear Professors, Scholars and Students, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am highly honoured to present to the members of this distinguished Assembly the greetings of the Joseph Ratzinger - Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation, which I have the honour of presiding and representing.

The reason for our participation in this festival is the partnership we have begun with the Nicholas Copernicus University of Torun. It is a common undertaking that today achieves its first result, with the awarding of the Reason and Hope Prize, which the Copernicus University and our Foundation established together. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the distinguished members of the Scientific Committee, of the Organizing Committee, along with the experts of the International Jury, who assisted us in establishing and realizing this first edition of the Prize.

As a man of great culture, Pope Emeritus Joseph Ratzinger has always appreciated and promoted the study of science and scientific research. His talents and personal inclination were such that his life — before he was called to the episcopate and then to the pontificate — was devoted to research and teaching in the university world.

A characteristic aspect of his thought is that human reason must always remain open and capable of ranging across the various disciplines, in order to preserve a rich and broad vision of the reality of man and the world, and in order to foster the integral development of the person and human family.

Therefore our Foundation wishes to cooperate with study and research initiatives that promote dialogue among the various natural and human sciences, philosophical, and even theological scientific disciplines.

The University is the natural and privileged place not only for the cultivation of the sciences, but also for the encounter and dialogue among them. That is precisely the reason why we try to create these collaborative efforts in the university environment in different countries around the world and in different cultural situations, where we meet people with open minds and hearts.

And this is exactly what we found here, in Torun.

For this constructive and cordial meeting, we are immensely grateful to the magnificent Rector, professor Andrzej Tretyn and to the whole Nicholas Copernicus University community, the honour of whose attention and benevolence we feel keenly.

The name we have given to our Prize, Reason and Hope, expresses that the orientation of our initiative with the Copernic University is not exclusively theoretical in nature, but aims also to promote dialogue among the sciences in service to the good of the person and of humanity in the “common home” that is our planet.

The themes we choose each year for the research projects that receive our Prize are therefore sensitive issues for the human condition in our day – this year the impact of the artificial intelligence, next year the man and the global ecosystem... - that cannot be matters of indifference to people who are aware of the stakes in the increasingly fast-paced journey of humanity. Catholic tradition has always supported the value of human reason, its ability to know the truth and to contribute to solving human problems positively. The wise use of reason is absolutely necessary to nourish that hope, which we need today in order to look to the future. Even those confident that salvation shall come ultimately from God are fully convinced of this. We are delighted, therefore, to join the world of the university in research and commitment to issues of crucial importance for our common journey.

Thank you for your attention and benevolence!