

Address for the Inauguration of the St John Paul II Institute of Culture

Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko, a collaborator of the three popes: John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis

I extend a respectful greeting to all of you who participate in this inauguration of the St. John Paul II Institute of Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas. I would like to congratulate both the authorities of this wonderful university in the person of Rector Michał Paluch OP, as well as partners who supported it: the Saint Nicholas Foundation and the Futura-luventa Foundation. The new Institute is meaningfully named after Saint John Paul II – and it is no coincidence!

In the life and teaching of this Pope, the problem of culture presents itself as one of the central themes. In a famous speech at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, he said:

Man lives a really human life thanks to culture. Human life is culture in this sense too that, through it, man is distinguished and differentiated from everything that exists elsewhere in the visible world: man cannot do without culture. [...] Culture is that through which man as man, becomes more man, "is" more, has more access to "being".

A particular vocation of the university as a community of professors and students is clearly outlined against this background. It puts itself at the service of a culture worthy of its name, a culture that is a life-giving bloodstream for man, which raises him in his human dignity, helps him grow in humanity, helps him to "be more" as a person! That is why the newly opened Institute of Culture, which inaugurates its activities today, is not just another addition to the already rich programme of this university, but rather its beating heart, which should remind us what is most important at the university: the service to thought, truth, knowledge, and finally – culture ...

Today we celebrate the centenary of the birth of St. John Paul II... This new Institute of Culture thus becomes a kind of "birthday gift" that his Alma Mater offers his distinguished alumnus, a gift he would certainly appreciate. I am convinced that this evening St. John Paul II would repeat the same words with which he concluded his speech at UNESCO: "Yes! The future of man depends on culture", after which he added: "Do not stop. Continue. Continue always."

Good luck to the new Institute! You too do not stop, continue, continue always!