

Vision of Church Higher Studies based on Pope's Francis' *Veritatis Gaudium*

Wizja kościelnych studiów wyższych na podstawie *Veritatis gaudium* papieża Franciszka

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Received: 29 Aug 2023
Revised: 15 Sep 2023
Accepted: 19 Oct 2023
Published: 31 Dec 2023

Abstract: Universities are constantly undergoing process of intensive transformations. The titular document of Pope Francis shows the current panorama of new challenges regarding the identity and activity of universities. Guided by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the experience of the Church gained in recent decades, the Pope points to the “criteria for renewal and revival of the contribution of ecclesiastical studies to Church of missionary outreach”. Reviving ecclesiastical studies, the Pope points to the vital need to give new impetus to scientific research conducted at universities and ecclesiastical faculties. Christian inspiration makes it possible to take into account the moral, spiritual and religious dimensions in research, and to evaluate the achievements of science and technology from the point of view of the integral good of the human person. The point is therefore that Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles should permeate and provide the substance for the various forms of academic activity, according to their nature and inherent autonomy.

Keywords: university and ecclesiastical studies, renewal of teaching, cultural challenges, spiritual challenges, educational challenges

Abstrakt: Uniwersytet nieustannie podlega procesowi intensywnych przeobrażeń. Tytułowy dokument papieża Franciszka ukazuje aktualną panoramę nowych wyzwań w odniesieniu do tożsamości i działalności uniwersyteckiej. Papież, kierując się nauczaniem Soboru Watykańskiego II i doświadczeniem Kościoła zdobytym w minionych dziesięcioleciach, wskazuje na „kryteria odnowienia i odrodzenia wkładu studiów kościelnych w Kościół wychodzący na misję”. Ożywiając studia kościelne, dostrzega żywą potrzebę nadania nowego impulsu badaniom naukowym prowadzonym na uniwersytetach i wydziałach kościelnych. Chrześcijańska inspiracja pozwala uwzględniać w badaniach wymiar moralny, duchowy i religijny oraz oceniać zdobycze nauki i techniki z punktu widzenia integralnego dobra osoby ludzkiej. Chodzi zatem o to, by katolickie ideały, postawy i zasady przenikały i wypełniały różne formy działalności akademickiej, stosownie do ich natury i właściwej im autonomii.

Słowa kluczowe: uniwersytet studia kościelne, odnowa nauczania, wyzwania kulturowe, wyzwania duchowe, wyzwania edukacyjne



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INTRODUCTION

The situation of the modern world gives rise to completely new challenges faced by education impacting the tasks related to instruction and formation. Education is perceived as factor of change, it is usually assigned fundamental role in the development of society, creating new social order and triggering development opportunities for both individuals and large social groups. Educational processes that take place in the realities of specific conditions of the contemporary world should contribute to the shaping of new future. The future means chances and opportunities that must be filled with specific content and values. The term education does not refer solely to instruction or vocational training, but also to the formation man as whole. “The problem of instruction has always been closely linked with the *mission of the Church*. In the course of the centuries, she founded schools at all levels; she gave birth to the mediaeval Universities in Europe: in Paris and in Bologna, in Salamanca, and in Heidelberg, in Krakow and in Louvain. In our age, too, she offers the same contribution wherever her activity in this field is requested and respected. (...) The system of education is organically connected with the system of the different orientations given to the way of *practising and popularizing science*, purpose which is served by high-level educational establishments, Universities and also, in view of the present development of specialization and scientific methods, specialized institutes (Jan Paweł II 1985, 733-734).

Pope Francis received rich legacy from the teachings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI on the question of “Catholic” universities as well as universities born out of “Christian inspiration”¹. Francis emphasizes, “This rich legacy of analysis and direction has been tested and enriched, as it were, «on the ground» thanks to the persevering commitment to social and cultural meditation on the Gospel undertaken by the People of God in different continental areas and in dialogue with diverse cultures. The time has now come for it to be consolidated and to impart to ecclesiastical studies that wise and courageous renewal demanded by the missionary transformation of Church that «goes forth»” (Franciszek 2017a, 3). This “Christian inspiration” of universities is manifested in various forms. The titular document of Pope Francis shows the current panorama of new challenges in relation to the identity and activity of universities. university with Christian roots is space for academic formation, where the creativity of the new People of God triggers changes in every environment, initiative or project. This space

¹ “We can and should speak of Catholic university in three cases: a) when the university is governed by the «competent ecclesiastical authority», for example by Bishop; b) when it is governed by an «ecclesiastical public juridical person», such as an Religious Institute, and c) when it is governed by other persons but has been recognized by competent ecclesiastical authority based on written document. (...) university can be considered «Christian inspired» if it is not governed by an ecclesiastical authority or by an ecclesiastical public juridical person, nor has it been recognized as Catholic by any competent ecclesiastical authority in writing. Obviously, university of this type, if it truly wishes to act based on Christian (or Catholic) inspiration, should take serious approach to the message of the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*” (Grocholewski 2013, 29-30).

provides an opportunity to show the light of the Gospel to the world, illuminating with this light the right activity and offering living witness of mature faith. The point is therefore that Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles should permeate and provide substance for the various forms of academic activity, in concord with their nature and their inherent autonomy.

I. CONTINUITY AND THE NEED FOR RENEWING THE ECCLESIASTICAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

“(…) at the approaching end of our millennium”, it is emphasized in the preamble of the Magna Carta of European Universities, “the future of mankind depends largely all on cultural, scientific and technical development; and (...) this built up in centres of culture, knowledge and research as represented by true universities” (Wielka Karta Uniwersytetów Europejskich 1988, preamble). Therefore, it is necessary to return to reflection on the meaning and future of universities, repeating the fundamental questions about its role in society, about knowledge as common good, about universities’ vocation for openness, meeting, overcoming barriers. It is necessary to make an effort towards synthesis allowing to orientate oneself in world that is not only more and more complicated, but also evidently undergoing constant changes whose cycles and results are unknown. Universities can throw the light on vital issues and thus allow us to gain better understanding of the processes taking place today. In this perspective, Christian-oriented institutions are especially predisposed to help the entire academic world in exploring the mystery of man in order to understand his role as interpreter, guardian and builder of the world, seeker of truth and creator of brotherhood, dialogue and peace (Galantino 2017, 127-128). “(...) today we are not only living in time of changes but are experiencing true epochal shift, marked by wide-ranging «anthropological» and «environmental crisis». Indeed, we daily see «signs that things are now reaching breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises». (...) In this effort, the worldwide network of ecclesiastical universities and faculties is called to offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas. Today it is becoming increasingly evident that «there is need of true evangelical hermeneutic for better understanding life, the world and humanity, not of synthesis but of spiritual atmosphere of research and certainty based on the truths of reason and of faith»” (Franciszek 2017a, 3).

Universities are constantly undergoing process of intensive transformations. The multitude of social needs and expectations towards university education requires that the academic community analyse its current status, future challenges and consider initiatives corresponding to these challenges. The identity crisis of universities is embedded in the identity crisis of modern man, whose sources can be found in various fields of human activity. For this reason, “The primary need today

is for the whole People of God to be ready to embark upon new stage of «Spirit-filled» evangelization. This calls for «resolute process of discernment, purification and reform». In this process, fitting renewal of the system of ecclesiastical studies plays strategic role. These studies, in fact, are called to offer opportunities and processes for the suitable formation of priests, consecrated men and women, and committed lay people. At the same time, they are called to be sort of providential cultural laboratory in which the Church carries out the performative interpretation of the reality brought about by the Christ event and nourished by the gifts of wisdom and knowledge by which the Holy Spirit enriches the People of God in manifold ways – from the *sensus fidei fidelium* to the magisterium of the bishops, and from the charism of the prophets to that of the doctors and theologians” (Franciszek 2017a, 3).

The search for the truth – about the world, about man, the search for answers to the questions people constantly ask, seems to be point of convergence for various fields of science and the creation of true *universitas*. Thus, as Pope Francis emphasizes, “This, then, is good occasion to promote with thoughtful and prophetic determination the renewal of ecclesiastical studies at every level, as part of the new phase of the Church’s mission, marked by witness to the joy born of encountering Jesus and proclaiming his Gospel, that set before the whole People of God as programme in *Evangelii Gaudium*” (Franciszek 2017a, 1). This message is addressed to Catholic universities as well as to all Catholic institutes of higher education that seek to instil in human souls and cultures the message of Christ’s Gospel. Thus, Catholic university is place where scientists, using methods specific to each scientific discipline, explore the reality, thus contributing to the enrichment of the treasury of human knowledge. systematic study of each discipline subsequently leads to dialogue between various disciplines leading to their mutual enrichment. This type of exploration not only helps man in his constant pursuit of the truth, but is also an eloquent testimony, so much needed today, of the Church’s conviction about the intrinsic value of science and scientific research. Research in Catholic university must necessarily include the following elements: a) striving for the integration of knowledge; b) dialogue between faith and reason; c) concern for the ethical dimension of science; d) the theological perspective (Jan Paweł II 1990, 10, 15)².

Universities, even when they present distinct cultural identities, should be able to accept without prejudice all those who wish to join their community of life and research. They should also offer everyone wealth that will not enslave those coming to contact with them but allow for their further development. As Pope Francis states: “Our world has become global village, with multiple types of interactions, where each person belongs to humanity, and shares the hope of better future with the whole family of peoples. At the time same, however, there are

² “For this actually to take place, he invites us «to broaden the scope of reason» thus enabling it to understand and guide the powerful new forces troubling the human family, «animating them within the perspective of that civilization of love whose seed God has planted in every people, in every culture». This in turn will «foster the interaction of the different levels of human knowledge», theological and philosophical, social and scientific” (Franciszek 2017a, 2).

so many forms of violence, poverty, exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, approaches which limit access to fundamental freedoms and create throw-away culture. Within this context, Catholic educational institutions are called to be on the front line in practicing grammar of dialogue, which forms people for encounter, and to value cultural and religious differences. For dialogue itself educates when person relates to others with respect, esteem and genuine listening, and speaks with authenticity, without obfuscating or diminishing their own identity, nourished by the inspiration of the Gospel” (Franciszek 2017b, 23). The first area where the culture of dialogue develops is the active cooperation of students and lecturers in everyday research and scientific work, characterized by common view of reality and sharing life values. Therefore, “Ecclesiastical studies cannot be limited to passing on knowledge, professional competence and experience to the men and women of our time who desire to grow as Christians, but must also take up the urgent task of developing intellectual tools that can serve as paradigms for action and thought, useful for preaching in world marked by ethical and religious pluralism. To do so calls not only for profound theological knowledge, but also the ability to conceive, design and achieve ways of presenting the Christian religion capable of profound engagement with different cultural systems” (Franciszek 2017a, 5).

2. PERSPECTIVES AND CRITERIA FOR THE RENEWAL OF ECCLESIASTICAL STUDIES

Development of modern science and the astounding scale of modern scientific research preclude the possibility of providing any simple synthesis of today’s knowledge. There are no modern equivalents of what was once referred to as *summa*, *compendium* or *tractatus*. However, many of the greatest minds in today’s academic world insist on redefining the original concepts of *universitas* and *humanitas* suiting for our times. It the question of the future of truly human culture, open to accepting ethical and spiritual values. The basic values of this culture include: dignity of the human person, sanctity of life, fundamental role of the family, great importance of education, freedom of thought and speech, freedom to profess one’s own religious beliefs, legal protection of individuals and human groups, cooperation of all people for the common good, the concept of work as participation in the work of the Creator Himself, authority of the state, which itself is governed by law and reason. These values belong to the treasury of European culture. It is this tradition that provided the basis for the concept of the human person perceived as the image of God, redeemed by Christ and called to an eternal destiny, endowed with inalienable rights and responsible for the common good of society (Jan Paweł II 1989, 26-27)³. As Pope Francis emphasizes:

³ “Every university must always preserve the traits of study centre «within man’s reach», where the student is preserved from anonymity and can cultivate fertile dialogue with his teachers from which he draws an incentive for his cultural and human growth. (...) Naturally, and also rightly, the disciplines tend to specialization, while what the person needs is unity and synthesis. Secondly,

“in the face of pervasive individualism, which impoverishes on human level and creates cultural barrenness, it is necessary that we humanize education. Schools and universities only attain their deepest meaning insofar as they are linked to the formation of the person. All educators are called on to collaborate in this process of human growth, with their professional skills and with the richness of the human values they bear, to help young people to be builders of world of greater solidarity and peace. Furthermore, Catholic educational institutions have as their mission to offer worldviews that are open to transcendence” (Franciszek 2017b, 22-23).

Man and his world, or rather the entire universe, appears to researcher and scholar as reality that lends itself to rational description and universal message. Today’s scientific language conveys words and images, transmits concepts and projects, theories and proofs of their validity to the growing numbers of people, thus allowing them to develop their culture and their humanity, to benefit from the achievements of science and their specific applications. Man of science is capable of opening up new spaces, to chart new paths in the immeasurable area of what is knowable but hitherto unknown. Scientific knowledge is not an end in itself as it remains at the service of man: of an individual and all humanity. Scientific research and practical application of knowledge gained thanks to it may lead searching minds to accept as true only what lies within the limits of reality perceived by the senses or mathematically verifiable. Even when scientists do not encounter the mystery of the transcendent Absolute, they cannot fail to encounter in their research work the mystery and problem of man, his origin and ultimate destiny, his wonderful possibilities and insurmountable limitations. In this context, it is important to give due place to the reflection on man, his Creator and his purpose. Science and faith meet in the spirit of mutual respect for each party’s competence and specificity (Jan Paweł II 1992, 16). Pope Francis, guided by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the experience of the Church gained in recent decades, indicates the following “criteria for renewal and revival of the contribution of ecclesiastical studies to Church of missionary outreach” (Franciszek 2017a, 4)⁴:

a) the enduring and priority criterion is contemplation and spiritual, intellectual and existential introduction to the heart of the kerygma (*preaching – act and content – of the good news about salvation revealed and accomplished by God in Jesus Christ*), that is, the constantly new and fascinating joyful news of the Gospel of Jesus. As

it is fundamentally important that the commitment to scientific research be open to the existential question of meaning for the person’s life itself. Research seeks knowledge, whereas the person also needs wisdom, that knowledge, as it were, which is expressed in the «knowing-living». In the third place, only in appreciating the person and interpersonal relationships can the didactic relationship become an educational relationship, process of human development” (Benedykt XVI 2007, 12-13).

⁴ “Closely linked to the Church’s evangelizing mission, which flows from her very identity as completely committed to promoting the authentic and integral growth of the human family towards its definitive fullness in God, is the vast multidisciplinary system of ecclesiastical studies. This system has developed over the centuries from the wisdom of the People of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in dialogue with, and discernment of, the signs of the times and diverse cultural expressions” (Franciszek 2017a, 1).

Pope Francis emphasizes, every time we try to return to the sources and recover the original freshness of the Gospel, there appear new ways, creative methods, other forms of expression, more eloquent signs, words that make sense for today's world. In fact, every authentic evangelizing activity is always «new» (cf. Franciszek 2013a, 11). This gives rise to special emphasis in formation on Christian-inspired culture, to discover in all creation the trace of the Holy Trinity;

b) the second criterion is dialogue in all its entirety. It is dialogue understood not as mere tactical approach, but as an intrinsic requirement to gain communal experience of the joy of truth and to deepen its meaning and practical implications. Pope Francis, referring to previously developed documents (cf.: *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et Spes"* – Vatican Council II; John Paul II, *Apostolic Constitution Sapientia Christiana – on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties*, 1979; John Paul II, *Apostolic Constitution Ex corde Ecclesiae – on Catholic Universities*, 1990), encourages promotion of dialogue with Christians belonging to other Churches and Ecclesial Communities and with persons belonging to other religious or humanist beliefs, and to maintain “contact with scholars of other disciplines, whether these are believers or not”, attempting to “evaluate and interpret the latter's affirmations and judge them in the light of revealed truth”;

c) the third fundamental criterion includes inter- and cross-disciplinary approaches implemented with wisdom and creativity in the light of Revelation. What distinguishes the academic, formative, and research approach of the ecclesiastical study system, both in terms of content and method, is the vital and intellectual principle of the unity of knowledge, with simultaneous awareness and respect for its diverse, interrelated, and convergent expressions. This theological and anthropological, existential and epistemological principle has special meaning and should present all its power not only within the system of ecclesiastical studies: ensuring both coherence and flexibility, organicity along with dynamism; but also in relation to today's fragmented and often disintegrated panorama of university studies and the uncertain, conflicting or relativistic pluralism of current beliefs and cultural options;

d) The fourth and final criterion concerns the urgent need to build networks among the various institutions that carry out ecclesiastical studies in every part of the world, establishing the necessary cooperation with scientific institutions in various countries and with those inspired by different cultural and religious traditions. At the same time, it is necessary to create specialized research centres devoted to studying epoch-making challenges facing today's humanity in order to propose adequate and realistic ways of solving them.

Catholic university, by bringing together the unfathomable richness of the salvific message of the Gospel and the manifold, vast areas of knowledge in which this richness is incarnated, enables the Church to establish an enormously fruitful dialogue with people of all cultures. It is in the context of the impartial search for truth, that the relationship between faith and reason is manifested in its essence. Christian inspiration makes it possible for Catholic university to take into account the moral, spiritual and religious dimensions in its research, and to evaluate the achievements of science and

technology in the perspective of the integral good of the human person. The continuous renewal of ecclesiastical studies, therefore, requires clear awareness that through its Catholic character, university is made more capable of an impartial search for truth; search that is neither subordinated to nor conditioned by any particular interests of any kind (Jan Paweł II 1990, 5-7)⁵. As Pope Francis said during his pastoral visit on September 22, 2013 in Cagliari “The university is privileged place where this culture of dialogue is promoted, taught and lived, this culture which does not indiscriminately level out differences and plurality — this is one of the risks of globalization — nor does it take them to the extreme, causing them to become causes of conflict. Rather, it opens to constructive dialogue. This means understanding and esteeming someone else’s riches; it means not seeing him with indifference or fear, but as an opportunity for growth” (Franciszek 2013b, 28).

3. UNIVERSITY AND CHURCH FACULTIES – SELECTED PRACTICAL INDICATIONS

There are various educational areas: school, family, media, catechesis and others. good school education in childhood and adolescence lays down seeds that can bear fruit throughout life. In this important process, university with Christian roots is also space for academic formation, when it offers an ethical and humanistic perspective on major social problems, influences changes in every environment, in every initiative and project. Both education and formation are oriented to facilitate personal development in all that improves our nature, and what we call good and valuable. It is an opportunity to show the light of the Gospel to the world, illuminating all activity with this light and offering living witness to mature faith. This Christian inspiration manifests itself in various forms. Therefore, as Pope Francis states, “In word, this calls for «changing the models of global development» and «redefining our notion of progress». Yet «the problem is that we still lack the culture necessary to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths». This vast and pressing task requires, on the cultural level of academic training and scientific study, broad and generous effort at radical paradigm shift, or rather – dare say – at «bold cultural revolution». In this effort, the worldwide network of ecclesiastical universities and faculties is called to offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas” (Franciszek 2017a, 3).

At Catholic university, any activity marked by intellectual honesty and academic seriousness falls within the scope of the evangelizing mission of the Church. This evangelizing mission aims to ensure that the way of thinking, criteria of evaluation and norms of action are rooted in the spirit of the Gospel. Developing own, original

⁵ The perspective outlined in this way “sets out demanding task for theology just as, in their own specific areas of competence, for the other disciplines contemplated in ecclesiastical studies. (...) Theology must doubtless be rooted and grounded in sacred Scripture and in the living tradition, but for this very reason it must simultaneously accompany cultural and social processes, and particularly difficult transitions” (Franciszek 2017a, 4).

proposals, which, although firmly rooted in the Word of God and the Tradition of the Church, can help in solving new problems and become valuable answer to questions posed by various contemporary cultural trends. “Specifically, shared and converging research between specialists of different disciplines represents particular service to the people of God, and especially to the Magisterium. It also supports the Church’s mission of proclaiming the good news of Christ to all, in dialogue with the different sciences and in the service of deeper understanding and application of truth in the life of individuals and society” (Franciszek 2017a, 5). Thus, when we talk about the university community, we refer to “university life”, of which the strictly academic element – classes, learning and exams – is only part. For students, this means experiencing the academic years as time of inner growth, maturing to fundamental decisions, establishing interpersonal bonds; for the university – and especially for the teaching staff – it is an incentive to create real “educational project”, which is to be meeting point of knowledge and life, centre of research and education, bridge between the past and the future. It is constituted as space that allows for critical use of the reason, and at the same time helps to raise the spirit and foster civic awareness capable of resisting the delusions of modernity. This is possible provided that we do not avoid the question of what ideal of humanity we follow when planning our future (Galantino 2017, 133-134).

Contemporary culture is marked by pluralism of attitudes, behaviours and ideologies. In order to establish the most fruitful dialogue with different cultures, we ourselves must be creative. Therefore, commitment to the service of the whole truth appears as requirement of freedom of research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge. Catholic university, by its vocation and the radical nature of its requirements, is truly open in all areas. Nothing in the material world is alien to it, and nothing from the world of the spirit remains outside the sphere of its cognitive interests. The role of Catholic university and ecclesiastical studies consists in going beyond the simple pragmatics of organizing teaching, as well as in transgressing ethical or intellectual pluralism devoid of the elements of the absolute. Ultimately, Catholic university assumes the use of intelligence that integrates the vision of faith. It is precisely this combination that gives research its broad dimension and ensures true freedom of the mind capable of self-criticism and constantly re-defining its position by reference to the original foundation, which is Jesus Christ living in the world and in the Church, as well as to the patrimony of faith authenticated by the Church Magisterium (Jan Paweł II 2003, 827-828)⁶. As Pope Francis emphasizes “In this regard, plans are under way for outstanding interdisciplinary centres and initiatives aimed at accompanying the development of advanced technologies, the best use of human resources and programmes of integration. Ecclesiastical studies, in the spirit of Church that «goes forth», are likewise called to develop specialized centres capable

⁶ “In regard to faculty members at Catholic colleges universities – states Benedict XVI – wish to reaffirm the great value of academic freedom. In virtue of this freedom, you are called to search for the truth wherever careful analysis of evidence leads you. Yet it is also the case that any appeal to the principle of academic freedom in order to justify positions that contradict the faith, and the teaching of the Church would obstruct or even betray the university’s identity and mission” (Benedykt XVI 2020, 95).

of deeper dialogue with the different scientific fields. (...) Ecclesiastical studies will thus be poised to make their specific and unique contribution of inspiration and guidance, and will be able to articulate and express in new, challenging and realistic way their proper task” (Franciszek 2017a, 5). Development of interdisciplinary research is conducive to the search for truth in all fields of knowledge, its discovery and dissemination, helps to overcome obstacles to perceiving man in his spiritual, ethical and transcendent dimensions. It also means meetings and confrontations among universities, contacts with other academic and formative institutions, with research centres including those dealing with theology. The truth about man is discovered along with discovering the truth about the world in which he lives. It is the duty of the man of science not only to discover this truth, but also to reflect on it as well as on its countless and varied expressions.

The reflection that the Pope invites us to is also reflection on the dimension of transcendence. It is impossible to exclude it from the areas where the determinants of humanity are explored, new social trends are studied and the foundations of the future are laid. The world, characterised by growing interdependencies in the area of economy, culture and communication, desperately needs “centres of thought” characterized by creativity and responsibility, centres of research and confrontation capable of meeting the emerging tasks, places open to new challenges and at the same time faithful to their source vocation. In this situation, one of the most urgent challenges facing today’s societies concerns the necessary verification and thorough revision of the formation processes offered to new generations. Scientific involvement is not only an activity concerning the intellectual sphere of man. university fulfils its own goal when, by employing both creative and scientific measures, it facilitates the development of an individual in specific community, releases that individual’s comprehensive spiritual potential, potential of the mind will and heart, in other words, leads to the formation of the whole man. In order to achieve these goals, university must apply appropriate tools, continuously modernize its methods, so that it can enjoy recognition in the world of culture, maintain its credibility and make contribution to science that would meet the expectations of the world of culture and the Church (Galantino 2017, 126-128)⁷. Pope Francis introduces new perspective, which can be summarized in the statement: “the mission of the Church is to go forth.” In this context, he emphasizes that “Ecclesiastical studies cannot be limited to passing on knowledge, professional competence and experience to the men and women of our time who desire to grow as Christians, but must also take up the urgent task of developing intellectual tools that can serve as paradigms for action and thought, useful for preaching in world marked by ethical and religious pluralism. To do so calls not only for profound theological knowledge, but also the ability to

⁷ “The university is part of the fight for man’s humanity. From the fact that it is called university or college, nothing yet follows for the cause of man. Yes, universities can even produce – it is bad expression, brutal expression – universities can develop series of learned, educated people, however, it is not the question of that, the point is whether the university has released this enormous spiritual human potential of man, through which man realizes his humanity” (Jan Paweł II 2010, 173-174).

conceive, design and achieve ways of presenting the Christian religion capable of profound engagement with different cultural systems” (Franciszek 2017a, 5). It is an invitation to start process, undertake some action. At the same time, the Pope warns against becoming only traditionalists of the roots and encourages to draw from them in order to grow, move forward, fulfil one’s life and take responsibility in society.

CONCLUSIONS

Church universities and faculties can become privileged actors in the dialogue between faith and culture of our times. As Pope Francis emphasizes “The revival of ecclesiastical studies entails the pressing need to give new impulse to the scientific research conducted in our ecclesiastical universities and faculties” (Franciszek 2017a, 5). For Catholic institutions of higher education, this means that if research and teaching which are part of the ecclesial community life, and which are conducted in the modern world undergoing rapid and profound changes, are to shape culture in Christian spirit, they must constantly strive for new ideas in the field of science, employ appropriate tools and constantly modernize the employed methods. Hence the special responsibility of Christian scientists and Catholic schools of higher education to contribute to removing serious imbalance between the general culture and the deepening of the faith. “This means an encounter between faith, reason and the sciences with view to developing new approaches and arguments on the issue of credibility, creative apologetics which would encourage greater openness to the Gospel on the part of all. When certain categories of reason and the sciences are taken up into the proclamation of the message, these categories then become tools of evangelization” (Franciszek 2013a, 132). The evangelical ideal of the Beatitudes may still provide an inspiration because it arouses admiration and expands human capacity to exist, to act, to contemplate, and to create. In this perspective, academic institutions of Christian inspiration are especially predisposed to become centres for developing their own, original proposals, which, although firmly rooted in the Word of God and the Tradition of the Church, can help solve new problems and provide valuable response to the questions posed by various contemporary cultural trends.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, S.Ch.; Methodology, S.Ch. and M.U.; Supervision, S.Ch.; Writing original draft: S.Ch. and M.U.; Writing – review & editing: SCh.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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