

## **The dignity of the human person as the basis for the integration of knowledge in the light of Saint Thomas Aquinas**

### **1. The great challenge: Integrating the university knowledge.**

From May 15-17, 2003, we met at this same University to hold the fifth ICUSTA Biennial Conference. Today, we miss several friends, who were present at that time and who have already departed to the house of the Father; like our dear Dominican friars Aníbal Fosbery (founder of FASTA and member of ICUSTA's Honorary Council) and Abelardo Lobato (both co-founders of this network) Rector of the University at that time and who hosts us today again, Juan Carlos Catalano; the founder of ICUSTA, Gerardo Rocha Vera; the remembered Cardinal Alexandre Dos Santos from Mozambique; the President of CEU in Spain at that time, Alfonso Coronel de Palma, or the President of St. Thomas University in New Brunswick, Canada, Daniel O'Brien. May God have them all in his glory, interceding for us, for our organization and for the fruits of our projects.

On that occasion, so distant and so close at the same time, I offered my poor reflection about "Some contemporary challenges for university life inspired on St. Thomas". Then, in this very place, almost twenty years ago, I said these words (I apologize for the inexcusable vulgarity of quoting myself):

*"Current demands for interdisciplinarity, for holistic and integrated visions challenge the Thomistic university tradition to offer an articulated vision of the knowledge and the know-how (expertise). A not merely pragmatic articulation, subjective or kaleidoscopic, but sapiential, founded on truth and the architectural order: on the subordination of means to the aims, and the particular aims to the universal objective of everything. (...) How can we integrate each discipline, each science and art (without thereby losing their own objects and methods) with the ultimate truths of being and of God?"*

I finished my speech with this impertinent question:

*"Will it not be the ultimate mission and vocation of (...) ICUSTA, to take up and carry out (...) the great task of recovering sciences, arts and professions from a Thomistic realism, integrating all the advances and contributions of Modernity favoring Truth, the ultimate aim and wellbeing of all men and the whole universe?"*

That was my shameful selfquoting. On that occasion, after a daring chatter, someone said with a great common sense, that the challenge I stated to ICUSTA far exceeded our possibilities. However, ladies and gentlemen, now two decades later, we can see with surprise and joy a significant progress in the direction proposed. After my presentation, I will mention several initiatives already carried out at ICUSTA and, later, in the first part of this Biennial, we will be shown, in detail, the concrete experiences about the "Integration of knowledge in the university in the light of St. Thomas Aquinas". Not to be missed.

Let's continue that conversation in the year 2003. "As we said, at that time ..." (twenty years is nothing at all!).

How to integrate knowledge? currently fragmented and scattered knowledge. Today, when we know more and more about less. Today, when accreditation criteria and the university rankings oblige academics to publish (or perish) in more and more learned and limited topics. Like a paper I have just seen about the use of term Mudejar and term Mudejaric in the Canary Islands, between the 13th and 15th centuries. Interesting, in any case. Well, in fact, according to North American statistics, each academic *paper* is read, in average, by 0.2 readers. Not even one reader. Zero point two (or zero "point" two, according to number system). I was the 0.2 reader of that paper about term mudéjar. Because, in fact, I didn't read the complete paper.

The mass-man by Ortega y Gasset, the barbarian-specialist, the savant-ignorant, the "specialized idiot" as called in Germany. The hyper-specialization is increasingly affecting professional and technical education. A real example: a colleague at my institute has suffered from pain in her arm for a few days, from the elbow to the shoulder. She wanted to schedule medical appointment for this condition, but she only found elbow and shoulder specialists. She went to the elbow specialist, but he did not agree to take responsibility for pain in the rest of the arm. Something similar had said the shoulder specialist. Are we training specialized idiots in our universities?

We are knowing more and more about less, and there is more and more information about more! In other words, the problem increases. As to Zygmunt Baumann says: *"from educational front, which distributes knowledge (...) the information itself has become the main site of the 'unknown'. Today what seems too vast, mysterious and wild' is the information itself (...): everything is here, accessible now and within reach and, however (...) beyond all hope of ever being fully understood"*<sup>1</sup>.

In these circumstances of growing demand for specialization and, on the one hand, and the unstoppable increase of information available, on the other: how do we expect to integrate knowledge? Knowledge "beyond all hope of ever being fully understood". Do we also want to integrate them? Who can do it? Where, and how?

Because, at the same time, we are requested of interdisciplinarity. It is popular. For example, Edgar Morin, one of the leading secularists in education, calls to overcome the disconnection of modern disciplines through what he calls the "complex thinking". Morin argues: *"The education of future is confronted with this universal problem, since there is an ever wider, deeper and more serious inadequacy between, on the one hand, our disjointed, fragmented and compartmentalized knowledge and, on the other, the increasingly multidisciplinary, crossed, multidimensional, transnational, global, and planetary realities or problems..."*<sup>2</sup> *"To rebuild the social structure, it is necessary to re-establish links between disciplines, including all dimensions of knowledge: literature, arts, poetry, chemistry, physics, biology, etc."*<sup>3</sup>

Realities, the social life and problems increasingly need multidisciplinary approaches, it is said by atheist thinker like Morin. How much more for our Catholic universities, where we declare to integrate the disciplines we teach, besides of Christian faith.

Indeed, everything said so far, is summarized in official **Magna Carta** in force for every Catholic higher education Institution- I am referring to the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* by St. John Paul II - with the following words:

*"The integration of knowledge is a process which can always be improved. Moreover, the increase of knowledge in our day, together with the growing specialization of knowledge within each academic discipline, make this work increasingly difficult. But a university and, mainly, a Catholic University "must be a 'living unit' of organisms devoted to the investigation of truth.... It is necessary, therefore, to promote such a higher synthesis of knowledge, where only that thirst for truth present in the deep of human heart will be satiated"*

<sup>1</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, Los retos de la educación en la modernidad líquida. Barcelona, Gedisa, 2007, pág. 42-44.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar Morin. Los siete saberes necesarios para la educación del futuro. Paidós Studio. Barcelona, 2001, pág. 44.

<sup>3</sup> E. Morin. Los desafíos de la reforma del pensamiento en educación. Conferencia en la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 17 de junio de 2008.

(...) by promoting such integration, a Catholic University should be committed, more specifically, to dialogue between faith and reason, so it can be seen more deeply how faith and reason meet in one truth. ".<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, in our universities, the integration of knowledge in pursuit of truth, in a superior synthesis of faith and reason, is not only suggested as other option, but it is imposed as priority obligation.

## 2. Sapiential integration according to St. Thomas Aquinas

Certainly, institutions that "adhere with conviction to ideals and teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas"<sup>5</sup> have a great advantage in this matter. Since as recognized in the *Encyclical Fides et ratio*, a singular place in this path corresponds to Angelic Doctor, who "had the great merit of outstanding the existing harmony between the reason and faith", he "argued that the light of the reason and the light of faith, both come from God; therefore, they cannot contradict each other".<sup>6</sup> So, as stated by Abelardo Lobato: "St. Thomas Aquinas can be designated as the 'architect' of Catholic University".

Architect is who harmoniously designs the whole of a beautiful building. Similarly, the principles and life of St. Thomas offer adequate bases to assemble with order and splendor, the different knowledge of the university. By the way, Knowledge and universities which are no longer, those of the 13th century that Aquinas knew and led so well.

Our patron liked using the concept "architecture" to illustrate the integration of knowledge. He often quoted the words of St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: "as a wise architect I laid foundations"<sup>7</sup> "ut sapiens architectus fundamentum posui" Now, I will read, as an example, some words of St. Thomas on this verse, in his extensive comments on this Pauline letter:

*"It is said that architect is the main creator, especially of a building, who is responsible to understand the general layout of the whole work carried out by manual work of craftsmen. And that is why he is called wise as to the building (...). It is clear, however, that the whole structure of a building depends on its foundations and, therefore, it is up to a wise architect to lay proper foundations".<sup>8</sup>*

And who is responsible to lay the proper foundations for the integration of all knowledge in one university? What architectural knowledge is the basis for the general layout of the entire educational work? In 1923, on the 600th anniversary of the canonization of St. Thomas, Pope Pius XI - with the Encyclical *Studiorum ducem* - confirmed and ordered that Thomas Aquinas should be considered "the head guide in the study of higher disciplines", also approving he should be called Universal Doctor and decreed the day of St. Thomas should be academic holiday in all Catholic educational institutions.

Therefore, next year, the seventh centenary of his canonization will coincide with the 30th anniversary of ICUSTA (great celebrations are coming!). So, our Universal Guide to Studies is unequivocal in identifying the architectural knowledge capable of designing the entire university building, the supreme knowledge, that is, wisdom.

<sup>4</sup> Juan Pablo II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, nn. 16 y 17.

<sup>5</sup> Misión ICUSTA.

<sup>6</sup> Juan Pablo II, *Fides et ratio*, n. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Juan Pablo II, *Fides et ratio*, n. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Super I Cor., cap. 3, l. 2.

And what does he mean by "wisdom"? By this term he means the knowledge of ultimate principles of everything (*causa altissima simpliciter*) established pillars for the whole building. The principles not of a specific area, as is proper to each science, but of the whole reality. And, therefore, he concludes, *it is up to wisdom "to judge and order everything"*. To judge and put everything in order<sup>9</sup>. To judge, that is, to specify the scope of each science. To order, that is, to situate each knowledge in relation to the others.

However, the concept of wisdom is similar. There are different types or levels of wisdom. Let us distinguish, with St. Thomas, at least four types of authentic wisdoms (there are also false wisdoms based on wrong principles). First, there is a wisdom for life, practical knowledge, which coincides with cardinal virtue of prudence, that is, knowing how to guide every daily decision. It allows us to judge and put in order our actions. Second, there is philosophical wisdom, theoretical knowledge that reaches the highest causes as far as only forces of human reason can reach. Third, there is theological wisdom or "sacred doctrine" *which refers "to God as the supreme cause, also for what He alone can know about Himself and which He communicates to others by revelation"*<sup>10</sup> That is, a systematic knowledge about God, and everything in God, reached thanks to faith. Finally, we come to a fourth type of wisdom, even greater, the gift of wisdom. This habit, received by the Holy Spirit in the soul, allows to know the supreme causes by certain connaturality with them *"so that, as it were, from the innermost part of himself, he judges and orders not only cognizable things, but also human actions and passions"*.<sup>11</sup>

Prudential wisdom, philosophical wisdom, theological wisdom and gift of wisdom. Four complementary intellectual habits for the integral formation of a Catholic university student. Two of them are more personal - prudence and the gift of the Holy Spirit – mainly acquired in the family and ecclesial life. The other two - philosophy and theology - can be learnt in a systematic and disciplinary way, so their natural environment is the university. St. Thomas learned, taught and perfected them in a remarkable way, he did so in dialogue with all the knowledge and cultures at his time.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI described the integrating and universal vision of his thought as follows:

*"In conclusion, St. Thomas proposes a broad and confident vision of human reason: broad because it is not limited to the spaces of the so-called empirical-scientific reason, but is open to the whole being and, therefore, also to fundamental and inalienable questions of human life; and confident because human reason, especially if accepts the inspirations of the Christian faith, it promotes a civilization that recognizes the human dignity, the intangibility of his rights and the obligatory nature of his duties."*<sup>12</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas: model of wide and trusting reason. Reason open to the whole being, from different epistemic perspectives: both scientific and sapiential. A vision capable not only to advance in theoretical knowledge about reality, but also of inspiring theoretical-practical disciplines, which can act to make a better world, more respectful of people's dignity.

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<sup>9</sup> Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 45, a. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. I, q. 1, a. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Super Sent. III, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Benedicto XVI, Audiencia General. Plaza de San Pedro, Miércoles 16 de junio de 2010.

Thus, Pope Ratzinger continued conclusion of his catechesis on Aquinas:

*"It is not surprising the doctrine on people's dignity, fundamental for recognition of inviolability of human rights, has evolved in environments that took the St. Thomas Aquinas legacy, who had a very high concept of the human creature. He defined it, with his rigorously philosophical language, as "the most perfect thing in all nature, that is, a subsistent subject in a rational nature" (Summa Theologiae, I<sup>a</sup>, q. 29, a. 3)."*<sup>13</sup>

Thus, we got the person as the summit of a disciplinary building, founded by wisdom. The human being: the most perfect reality of the universe. A microcosm that constitutes *"like certain horizon and boundary between corporeal and incorporeal beings"*<sup>14</sup> which, besides, in a certain sense, is everything, *quodammodo omnia*.<sup>15</sup> The most perfect image of God.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the person, every individual of rational nature, has the highest dignity, the greatest value.<sup>17</sup> This is a brief synthesis of foundation offered by St. Thomas on the essential people's dignity. Of every concrete and singular person. For those who might consider Aquinas as a rationalist and abstract intellectual, can see how he specifies what he understands by "person": *"person... in human nature shows this flesh, these bones and this soul, which are the principles that individualize man"*<sup>18</sup>. Me, my flesh (major or minor) my bones and my soul. I am the most perfect and worthy being in all nature (though perhaps it may not seem so). And you. And each of us, in itself. Not the human race, the abstract Humanity. Just the opposite of the famous phrase of Linus, Charlie Brown's friend: *"I love humanity. It's people I can't stand"*.

We cannot explain here the consequences and characteristics of personal being based on Thomistic principles, deepened by the very rich personalist tradition. Nor the important use of these principles in theological reflection on the divine and angelic person. Allow me only to light the depth of Christian conception of individual, with some wise words of our dear Father Fosbery:

*"In the fullness of time, human existence has been crossed by movement that goes from the person, elevated by grace, to nature. From nature, perfected by grace to the person (...) its ontological constitutive, in the most concrete and existential sense, comes from the personal-trinitarian God who has willed, before creation, the man be in 'his image and likeness'. And here, dynamic and operative dimension of the person is founded, characterized by self-transcendence, the fruit of his unceasing journey towards his fullness and final perfection. (...) Also from here derive the universal rights that embrace the totality of the person, from conception to his definitive transit to the House of the Father."*<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Some modes for disciplinary integration

Let's see now how the university knowledge can be articulated around the person and his or her dignity. I will mention, in general, some models already proposed and implemented. I will group them based on three major emphases: 1° personal being as the highest object in study; 2° the good of people as purpose of every university discipline; and 3° people as subjects of university life. First emphasis has a more ontological bias,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Contra Gentiles II, cap. 68, n. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Contra Gentiles II, cap. 68, n. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Contra Gentiles II, cap. 68, n. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Contra Gentiles II, cap. 68, n. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Contra Gentiles II, cap. 68, n. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Aníbal Fosbery, La cultura católica, pág. 317-318.

the second one, has more ethical direction and the third one emphasizes the existential dimension. Then, dignity of people, as respectively-ontological referent, ethical and existential, for the integration of knowledge.

I would like to point out that, for me, every proposal I will mention is valuable and well-focused. If I note some limitations, it does mean to disqualify them, but rather to point out how the various approaches could complement each other.

1° Personal being as the highest study object.

Object of study. Obviously, this integration modality has theoretical accentuation. It seeks to know, understand and contemplate reality. Anyway, we know that "the speculative understanding becomes practical by extension of the operation"<sup>20</sup> (so, there is nothing more practical than a good theory).

And, as we said, this first approach has an ontological emphasis: it seeks to know the being of things, what they are, how they are. As it corresponds to Thomistic realism. But the natural desire to know makes we examine everything. And, within the whole of reality, we find the person as the most perfect reality, that which "has the most being". And, as good transcendentals, *ens et bonum convertuntur* (being and good are interchangeable) so, the person is the reality with the highest level of both being and good, it is the more worthy thing to be found in the research of universe.

Now, how can the various knowledge that allow us to know -always in a partial way- the inexhaustible richness of reality be ordered among themselves? How can we articulate the different abstraction and depth degrees, for example, between empirical and mathematical sciences, human and aesthetic sciences, philosophy and theology?

Among the proposed orderings for theoretical disciplines, I see three types of articulation: sequential order, parallel order and simultaneous order.

Sequential order of knowledge proposes teaching one discipline after the other. Following a system, either ascending or descending: from the most particular to the most general, or vice versa. For example, in medieval universities, liberal arts were taught first (including philosophy) since they were understood as instrumental in the highest knowledge of theology, or in the applied knowledge of law and medicine. In modern times, when liberal arts are still taught, whether in a college, minor or bachelor degree, they are understood as the basis of general culture, before entering the more specific areas of knowledge of each discipline. In the first case, the medieval, a thorough understanding of the person and care for his or her dignity was at the end, but now they are at the beginning. The concept of liberal education, as a general and non-utilitarian basis of knowledge, which allows to continue with any successive specialization, originates in Greek humanism and is recovered in our days, among others, by St. John Henry Newman in his "Idea of a University", who includes -together with classical studies - theology, as the most important general knowledge because it gives the ultimate basis for all the others.

From sequential order, let us move to parallel, always within the first approach, ontological. Here, the aim is not to the student to have a general knowledge in various liberal disciplines, but rather reasonable: it is restricted to offer advanced view only to specific discipline, usually his professional discipline. To give a philosophical (and perhaps theological) support to the specialized knowledge taught in each separate faculty

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<sup>20</sup> Super Sent. III, d. 23, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 2.

or major, in parallel. Philosophy of Law, Philosophy of Education, Philosophy of Science, Political Philosophy, Social Doctrine of the Church, Medical Anthropology, etc.

Several ICUSTA's most original initiatives can be found in these lines. For example, "Disciplinary Forums". These forums -which name was taken from Universidad FASTA - have the purpose of sharing among different ICUSTA institutions, the efforts to base each particular science or art on a sapiential vision. This way started the "disciplinary forum in Health" and more recently a "disciplinary forum in Psychology", which has organized seminars of anthropological deepening for academics in Psychology. Certainly, these seminars seek to complement, sapientially, the restricted knowledge about the human person and his or her dignity, which is normally received in psychological studies. Likewise, in the field of the natural sciences, the "Aquinas Initiative for Religion, Education and Science", AIRES, organized seminars on Faith and Science and edited the book "Scientific Research and Catholic Faith. Health, Psychology, Science, Law, Economics, etc. Each discipline separately and in parallel, in search of the ultimate causes of architectural foundations.

Thus both, sequential and parallel order connect particular knowledges only when they refer to common principles of wisdom, but they do not connect directly to each other. However, simultaneous articulation links different formal perspectives around the same material object of study. The same reality studied by everyone at the same time. The same common theme: the star, the rabbit, the sea, the 18th century or the Mona Lisa. Each of them studied from different points of view: historical, aesthetic, empirical, mathematical, philosophical, theological. As MacIntyre asked: to prevent the university from being a "multiversity" we must focus - he says - "*on a single universe, whose various aspects are the object of research by several disciplines, but in such a way that each aspect needs to be related to all the others*". Particularly, he proposed to study the human person in this way, from all disciplines at the same time.<sup>21</sup> This is the most ontological variant of this ontological approach: centered on the unity of being, not on the diversity of knowledge.

This simultaneous ordering of knowledge on common themes, has also been tested at ICUSTA. For example, with "Multidisciplinary Online Course on Globalization". There, the globalization phenomenon was globally addressed: by several disciplines and from several countries. In addition, a new ICUSTA Forum on Family is being set up, which will be an interdisciplinary thematic forum.

Here, two postmodern dangers emerge: relativism and juxtaposition. Or, as required: relativistic juxtaposition. The first danger: all disciplinary perspectives have the same value; they all contribute something. The second one: the different knowledge do not really interact with each other, but they are grouped together and limited to one multidisciplinary sum. Those of us who adhere Thomistic vision have clear that, also in this case, philosophical and mainly theological wisdom have a higher position, a "meta disciplinary" status, and they put the other disciplines in the right place. However, transdisciplinary dialogue, which Pope Francis has encouraged in the new constitution for ecclesiastical universities is more difficult: "*as placement and maturation of all knowledge in a space of Light and Life offered by the Wisdom from God's Revelation*".<sup>22</sup>

Let us say something, very briefly, about the other two emphases for the integration of knowledge: ethical and existential. These are rather practical than theoretical.

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<sup>21</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition*, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Francisco, *Veritatis gaudium*, 4c.

## 2° The goodness of people as objective of all university disciplines.

As St. Thomas makes clear in his already mentioned comment about the first letter to the Corinthians: "*Thus, it is said that a wise man in a building is who considers the main reason of the building, that is, the aim, and orders the inferior craftsman what must be done for the sake of the aim*".<sup>23</sup>. That is, the main purpose is firstly placed in the order of final purpose: the ultimate objective sought over any other partial purposes. And what is the ultimate objective of all the disciplines cultivated in the university? Aquinas gives the answer in his words about Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "*All the sciences and arts are ordered to one thing, that is, the perfection of man, which is his happiness*"<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, since the common purpose of all university disciplines is the full good of human person, the practical integration of every knowledge must be precisely aimed at the perfection and happiness of each real person: academics, students, collaborators, members of society.

Accordingly, the *Ex corde Ecclesiae* constitution established ethical concern as an essential element for a Catholic University (together with the dialogue between faith and reason to achieve integration of knowledge). This, for the three traditional university dimensions: teaching, research and extension.

Thus, concern for the ethical training of students is usually reflected in the incorporation of courses on ethics across all the disciplines. But this is not enough: everything taught in this course must be consistent with what is transmitted and modeled by other faculty members, especially in practical activities. Although moral formation comes from childhood by repeated good actions, and although graduates will always be responsible for the consequences of their actions, nevertheless, university education will, at least, make them to reflect on the implications in their professional life for the respect and promotion of people dignity. In this line, it is worth mentioning, for example, webinar organized by ICUSTA on "The Use of Literature to Form Values", as well as online course "University Social Responsibility".

In *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, St. John Paul II also emphasized "the role of different national and international associations of Catholic Universities" for the cooperation in common projects, which concretely contribute to the progress of society and the integral growth of every man and woman<sup>25</sup>. In this sense, our ICUSTA network has been especially important with its "Fund for Solidarity Projects", which has promoted valuable experiences of international volunteering to help disadvantaged communities, in coherence with the Thomistic vision of a whole human good.

## 3° People as University life actors.

Finally, the third emphasis which I call "existential", points out the ontological articulation or ethical purpose of all knowledge, but a vital integration in each university student. Moreover, this approach makes possible to recover the two personal wisdoms (prudential and the gift) together with the two disciplinary wisdoms (philosophy and theology).

I think the existential integration of wisdom was the practiced by Thomas in his formation and academic life, and is what he proposes in the global project of *Summa Theologica*: "*we will deal with the following: first, with God; second, man's journey towards God*";<sup>26</sup> The way of each person towards God. In fact, the wise man starts from first cause, God, and from there he orders all knowledge and human actions. But, in an eminent way, my personal union with God (with "the personal-trinitarian God") allows me to order wisely all my own life and

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<sup>23</sup> Super I Cor., cap. 3, l. 2.

<sup>24</sup> In *Metaph.*, proem.

<sup>25</sup> Juan Pablo II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, nn. 34 y 35.

<sup>26</sup> *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, proem.



all my knowledge, in an ascending march - hand in hand with Christ - towards the sublime contemplation of divine truth, in which my beatitude consists. What a great educational project, isn't it?

It was the road followed by Thomas since his childhood in Montecasino, he asked monks "what is God". There, he learned that "understand things is to understand their relationship with Christ".<sup>27</sup> There, he discovered that sacred and profane study allowed him to advance in the *quaerere* Deum, in the search for God as the unchangeable foundation of life, through the reading, the dialogical meditation and the liturgical prayer. Then, at the university, he came again into contact with the *lectio and disputatio*, now as systematic intellectual exercises, which would feed not only his liturgical prayer, but also his teaching and preaching. "*Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*". "*Contemplate and transmit what is contemplated to others.*"<sup>28</sup> At the end of his life, when he considered all his writings as a heap of straw compared to the divine truth contemplated, he reaffirmed before Christ that the only interested reward was "Nothing but you, Lord!"

This is why St. Paul concludes in the passage to the Corinthians already quoted: "*As a wise architect I laid the basis. Let each one to see how he builds, as far as the foundation, no one can lay other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*"<sup>29</sup> And St. Thomas adds, "*And it is said of the foundations (Is. 28:16): 'behold, I will lay in the foundations of Zion a cornerstone, tried and precious,' that is, founded on the basis*"<sup>30</sup>.

Christ is the cornerstone that we will not disregard (Acts 4:11). True wisdom, based on Christ, allows the most perfect integration of knowledge to which we can aspire in ICUSTA, so each member - and the whole of society - may attain in his or her personal life the highest dignity to which he or she is called.

Por eso, recogiendo la improvisada invitación que nos hiciera a viva voz san Juan Pablo II en la Plaza de San Pedro el 2001, durante la cuarta conferencia bienal de ICUSTA, "¡Adelante con estos proyectos de Santo Tomás!", por eso, digo, respondemos hoy una vez más al llamado de Juan Pablo Magno para contribuir a la integración del saber: "*Guiados por las aportaciones específicas de la filosofía y de la teología, los estudios universitarios se esforzarán constantemente en determinar el lugar correspondiente y el sentido de cada una de las diversas disciplinas en el marco de una visión de la persona humana y del mundo iluminada por el Evangelio y, consiguientemente, por la fe en Cristo-Logos, como centro de la creación y de la historia*"<sup>31</sup>.

That is why, taking up the impromptu invitation that St. John Paul II made to us in St. Peter's Square in 2001, during the fourth ICUSTA biennial conference, "Move forward with those projects of St. Thomas"! Therefore, today I answer again to the call of John Paul, to contribute to the integration of knowledge: "*Guided by the specific contributions of philosophy and theology, university studies will constantly strive to determine the corresponding place, and meaning of each of the various disciplines within the framework of a vision of the human person, and of the world enlightened by the Gospel and, consequently, by faith in Christ-Logos, as the center of creation and history...*".

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<sup>27</sup> San Bonifacio.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. II-II, q. 188, a. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Super I Cor., cap. 3, l. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Super I Cor., cap. 3, l. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Juan Pablo II, Ex corde Ecclesiae, n. 16.