

The Person and the Challenges
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How John Paul II was Awarded Doctor Honoris Causa by the AGH University of Science and Technology

It is ten years since the Pontifical Academy of Theology assumed a new name of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow – this jubilee rekindles memories of the prominent figure of the only Pope of Polish descent who, apart from being a recipient of numerous other titles and distinctions, was also awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow. The very opportunity to present my reminiscences of that event in a publication related to the jubilee of the Pontifical University of John Paul II sparks vivid recollections springing from the contacts between the Pope and our academic community. The fond memories I cherish are so abundant because John Paul II was always well-disposed towards the AGH UST lecturers, and we reciprocated his kindness with our genuine respect, admiration and fervent love. The climactic moment in our mutual relations was undoubtedly the celebration held on the 1 April 2000 when I, as the incumbent Rector of our University, had the honour to confer the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon the Pope, including him as the Engineer of the World in our academic community. The ceremony took place in the magnificent Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace in Vatican where, over the ages, popes had bestowed the cardinal's insignia on successive Princes of the Church. On that particular day, however, the Pope was not the giver, but the receiver; paradoxically, it was the giver who received more generous gifts.

The road leading to the memorable conferment of the title of the AGH UST Doctor Honoris Causa upon the Pope had been long and hard, considering the

fact that John Paul II used to decline such titles. As an exception he accepted the honorary doctorates of the Catholic University of Lublin (on 17 June 1983) where he had previously worked as a lecturer, and of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (on 22 June 1983) where he had studied in his youth. Afterwards he regularly refused such requests (being inundated with similar invitations literally from all over the world), so it seemed next to impossible that he might accept our title of Doctor Honoris Causa. Fortunately, the opposite happened and I would like to talk about it in a nutshell.

But before I do that, I will allow myself to walk down memory lane and recall two short, very personal stories. The first one refers to the remote past: likemany Krakow's residents I also had my own experience with Karol Wojtyła in the times when he still held the position of Cardinal and Archbishop of Krakow. It was during the summer holidays in 1970. My studies were drawing to an end (I defended my Master thesis in 1971), so I decided that, before I formally became a representative of the intelligentsia (with an official university diploma and the characteristic bewilderment which accompanies all young graduates when they embark upon their professional careers), I should see the world which I had known only from television coverage. As a result, a friend of mine and I decided to travel around Europe on my old WSK motorcycle.

Despite all the difficulties (utterly unimaginable to contemporary youth) we obtained the passports and necessary visas, but there remained one "hitch": our complete lack of money. Besides the fact that, as students we were not particularly wealthy, taking any foreign currencies abroad was treated by the Communist authorities as committing a serious offence, so we faced the prospect of having to go on a trip with barely five dollars on us as it was the sum we had managed to get hold of and the amount of money we could legally take out of the country. Although we were willing to sleep in a tent and we had prepared in advance some canned food supplies we could carry in a custom-built sidecar (my first engineering achievement!), things did not look good. Then my friend K. (I do not reveal his name here as he may not want me to do so), said that he, as an active member of the university chaplaincy, knew Cardinal Wojtyła. I had never participated in the chaplaincy events or activities, but K. had told me a lot about the Holy Masses celebrated on a felled tree stump, about Communion bread slices cut in a camping pot bowl, about our Archbishop's authenticity and kindness. So K. went with his heart in his mouth to the Bishop's Palace in Franciszkańska Street and returned triumphantly with a few sheets of paper on which there was a "To Whom It May Concern" letter rendered in several



fot. Arturo Mari

different languages and stating that we were decent but poor Polish students, so Cardinal Karol Wojtyła kindly requested the person to whom we would submit this letter to be of all possible assistance to us.

Those sheets of paper became our ticket to Europe. It was unbelievable to me: wherever we found ourselves, Cardinal's signature opened up many different opportunities to us. At first we experienced it in Vienna where we arrived after some dramatic days of our passage through Czechoslovakia – it was just after the act of “fraternal help” for Czech communists (a euphemism which stood for a Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in which Polish troops participated as well). So while we, totally vulnerable, were travelling by motorcycle with Polish registration plates, we had various, not always enjoyable, “adventures”. So, in Vienna, thanks to Cardinal Wojtyła's letter which we submitted in Cardinal Koenig's office, we immediately got a well-paid job, very cheap accommodation

and the Catholic parish's care which prevented us from starving. Then, with the money earned in Vienna, we travelled all around Austria, visited a large part of Italy, some places in Switzerland and southern France – whoever we turned to provided us with help after we produced the Cardinal's letter. I lost count of how many monasteries and parishes we lived in, and lost count of the numerous people who showed us their disinterested friendliness and came to our assistance – just because one Man had written a few good words about us, a Man whose name was notofficially spoken in Poland as he “did not exist” for the Communist regime. But such a state of affairs could not last long: and in fact, it did not!

Much later in my life, as, Rector of the AGH University of Science and Technology, I had an opportunity to recount that story during one of the audiences with the Pope which I will describe in this text. He asked me what I had done with that sheet of paper which had served as my “ticket to the world”. Filled with shame and regret, I had to admit that having returned from that tour I had thrown the letter away in an unguarded moment while spring-cleaning my documents after my graduation. Just imagine: such a valuable autograph! The Pope replied with that famous gentle smile of his, that he still considered me a decent man, and could write it down again. Unfortunately no such occasion arose...

Another event in my life related to John Paul II took place during his second pilgrimage to Poland on 22 June 1983 when the Jagiellonian University took the decision to confer the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon the Pontiff. Everyone was dreaming about getting inside the medieval building of the Collegium Maius where the ceremony was due to be held, but a very small number of invitation cards for people from outside the Jagiellonian University were issued. However, fortune smiled on me again: the then Rector of the AGH UST, Professor Antoni Kleczkowski, decided that one of the few invitation cards allocated to the University would be granted to our youngest Associate Professor. After checking with the Human Resources Department it turned out that it was me who struck it lucky. It was the first time I had visited the AGH UST Rector's study (which later on became my workplace for over seven years) and the first time I would have attended the ceremony of the conferment of the Doctor Honoris Causa title. Rector Kleczkowski who had called me to his study was clearly moved as he also knew that my defense of the post-doctoral degree (called “habilitation” in Polish) took place in January 1980.

The Rector solemnly handed me the treasured pass to the Collegium Maius, congratulated me, and additionally suggested that I should deliver an inaugural

speech at the beginning of the upcoming academic year 1983/84, and I gladly accepted that offer. At that time inauguration ceremonies were not held in the AGH-UST Assembly Hall, but in the lobby of the A-o, our main building. So instead of a slideshow I used huge wooden boards which I had painstakingly painted myself and hung on the stair banister and the gallery railing. One of those boards can be seen in the photo below. But I got sidetracked, so let me return to our main topic.

What I remember best from the conferment of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon John Paul II at the Jagiellonian University is the Pope's joke. Due to the packed timetable of his second visit to Poland he had many unscheduled yet necessary appointments and hence he arrived late for the ceremony. It is worth noting that security checks were very rigorous then and the guests with invitation cards (such as mine) had been admitted to the venue an hour prior to the event at the latest. So we all had been waiting for a long time and when it was time for the ceremony to begin the Pope was still not to be seen. When he finally appeared, people, overwhelmed with great joy, started cheering and applauding, even singing, but they also wanted to know what had caused the delay. John Paul II, instead of listing a dozens of obstacles he must have had to overcome, said to us with a smile: "Well, at Polish universities we have got something called 'fifteen-minute academic grace' for lecturers, haven't we?" I glanced at my watch: and, indeed, the Pope's delay which had seemed so lengthy to us, did not last even a quarter of an hour!

The participation in the above ceremony at the Jagiellonian University was undoubtedly an unforgettable experience for me. Yet when I became the AGH-UST Rector in January 1998, there emerged an idea to endeavour to confer the title of the AGH-UST Doctor Honoris Causa upon John Paul II. I started to strive to achieve that aim by contributing to a very significant event: namely, owing to my efforts, on 7 October 1998 the AGH-UST Senate adopted, by acclamation, a document entitled *The Message* ("Przesłanie") which included addresses to the Pope related to the twenty years of his pontificate.¹ In this document the Senate of our University appealed to John Paul II with two requests: firstly, asking the Pope to name Saint Hedwig, the Queen of Poland, a patron of a united Europe, and secondly, to pay a visit at the AGH-UST during his next pilgrimage to Poland scheduled for 1999. I passed on that document to John Paul II at the private audience on 18 October 1998. I remember handing the Pope a carefully selected

¹ The AGH-UST archives: *The Senate Documents*.

gift: a decorative mining staff with a handle in the shape of a ceremonial mining battle axe, which, along with a scepter, belongs to the traditional insignia of the AGH-UST Rector.

I also told the Pope that we would like that staff to be his support in his numerous journeys, and, just as the mining axe was used to strike hard rocks to unearth precious metal, we wanted our gift to serve the Pope to strike hardened human hearts and unearth the gems of beauty and nobility. John Paul II clearly enjoyed that thought and it created a warm atmosphere, so when the key question was asked: “Could we possibly seek Your Holiness’ acceptance of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of our University?”, the Pope replied smilingly: “Strike to unearth precious metal!”

The following day we were invited to private afternoon tea (which did not include ‘Papal cream cakes’ – the Pontiff’s favourite pastries he would buy as a student –, but delicious madeleine cakes) and made more specific arrangements which resulted in John Paul II’s momentous visit to the AGH-UST on 17 June 1999. Because of the Pope’s ill health my original plan to organize the visit indoors, particularly in our Assembly Hall, turned out to be unfeasible, although we had discussed it in the Vatican. That is why the Pope arrived in his Pope mobile to meet the crowds of our lecturers and students who had gathered on the lawn in front of the A-o main building; he listened to my greeting, addressed a concise but very cordial speech, and then blessed the ‘Solidarity’ banner and the new statue of Saint Barbara, recently placed on the roof of the main building.

I took a miniature version of this statue, cast in silver, and offered it to the Pope during our meeting on 16 October 1999 at the Vatican when the representatives of the Krakow’s municipality and of Lesser Poland Province authorities went to Rome to thank John Paul II for his visit to our city and the region in June 1999. Since I was a member of that delegation, I had the opportunity to hold a longer conversation with the Pope and – once more – to ask his opinion about the conferment of the degree of the AGH-UST Doctor Honoris Causa upon him; again, the very idea met with the approval of the Pope.

Since our initiative of submitting a motion for the award of the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa on John Paul II gained the Pontiff’s acceptance for the second time, I took appropriate action. I was aware that the decision to bestow the honorary doctorate on a person apparently unrelated to the world of technology needed to be justified. I was not concerned about the criticism from inside the AGH-UST since our university lecturers were unanimous that it would be a great honour for us if the most distinguished Pole became a member of our

academic community. However, we had already come under attack from the outsiders on 15 June 1999, during the Holy Mass celebrated by John Paul II on the Krakow's Błonia Commons, a silver chalice was handed to the Pope as a present from the AGH-UST community; it was inscribed with a sentence: "This chalice is a gift for His Holiness John Paul II from the community of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of its foundation".

That event was commented upon in a tabloid "NIE" by Jerzy Urban, its editor-in-chief and an infamous spokesperson of the martial law government in Poland. Urban published a virulent libel entitled "A Snifter for the Pope" in which he sneered at John Paul II, ridiculed the AGH UST community and targeted me personally implying that I had embezzled the funds allocated for the tuition of our students or to scientific research, spending it instead on the purchase of the silver chalice, plated with 24-carat gold (the latter fact was stressed three times in the article). Urban wrote as a worried citizen anxious that the money he had paid in taxes was being stolen, so he demanded an audit by The Supreme Audit Office (NIK). And his demand was satisfied as the auditors *did* come to the AGH UST...

Being aware of such attitudes outside our university, I did my best to provide comprehensive information on the argumentation justifying our decision. First and foremost, I addressed all the members of the AGH UST Senate, publishing the full text of my *laudation* which contained relevant arguments indicating the role of John Paul II's ethical guidelines in directing and shaping new technological solutions. As a result, when at the Senate's sitting on 2 February 2000 I put forward a motion for the award of the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa on the Pope, it was passed by acclamation. The motion was also unanimously supported by the resolutions of Faculty Councils of all fourteen faculties of our university.

I wrote a letter to the Pope notifying him about our decision (the letter was published in the *Biuletyn Informacyjny Pracowników AGH*, i.e. the AGH UST Bulletin of February 2000, Issue 7, p. 3)² and then, in Issue 77 of the same Bulletin (April 2000, p. 13)³, I provided the ample justification for the Senate's decision.

² R. Tadeusiewicz, "List Rektora AGH do Ojca Świętego w sprawie Doktoratu Honoris causa" ("The AGH UST Rector's Letter to John Paul II Concerning the Honorary Doctorate"), *Biuletyn Informacyjny Pracowników AGH* (ISSN 1425-4271), February 2000, Issue 75, p. 3, <http://www.uci.agh.edu.pl/kadra/bip/75/>

³ R. Tadeusiewicz, "Laudacja związana z nadaniem Jego Świątobliwości Ojcu Świętemu Janowi Pawłowi II, tytułu doktora honoris causa AGH", („The *Laudatio* on the occasion

In this way I acquainted the AGH UST employees with the matter. Bearing in mind the general public interested in those events I published an article entitled “The Engineer of the World” (a daily *Dziennik Polski*, 4 April 2000, p. 12)⁴. The title was a quote from my *laudatio* where I gave the Pontiff that title, thus demonstrating the immense influence of his teachings on the ethical aspect of technological creativity. That title inspired a Cracovian sculptor Karol Badyňa to create (of his own accord!) a sculpture representing the Pope as the Engineer of the World.

This work of art adorns the wall of the main AGH UST building A-o and can be found at the entrance to the Assembly Hall.

Unfortunately, the expectations held by the AGH UST authorities and its academic community that the Pope would visit our university could not be fulfilled. Bishop Stanisław Dziwisz, John Paul II’s secretary, brought that fact to our attention in his letter of 14 February 2000 addressed to the Rector Ryszard Tadeusiewicz. He announced that conducting the award ceremony of the honorary doctorate in the Vatican was the only option which could be available. In his letter Bishop Dziwisz also gave us a helpful tip when he wrote: “I wish to enable the AGH UST representatives to meet His Holiness John Paul II when they arrive in Rome. Provided that the delegation includes a limited number of persons, we will have a better chance to arrange the conferment of this prestigious AGH UST distinction upon the Pontiff at a convenient time”.⁵

The date of the ceremony was fixed for the 3 April 2000. I was personally delighted to discover that it was my name day. I could not imagine a better present for my name day!

On that occasion ten coaches from the AGH UST departed for Rome. The official delegation of the University Senate travelled in the first of them; the group consisted of thirty persons and, as the Senate is composed of one hundred members, I, as the Rector, had the tough and delicate task of selecting the representatives (being aware that my decision could have sparked conflict). However, Bishop Dziwisz’s guideline was clear: the Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace

of the conferment of the title of the AGH UST Doctor Honoris Causa upon His Holiness John Paul II”), *Biuletyn Informacyjny Pracowników AGH* (ISSN 1425-4271), Issue 77, April 2000, p. 13, http://www.biuletyn.agh.edu.pl/archiwum_bip/_2000/_77/13_77.html

⁴ R. Tadeusiewicz, “Inżynier Świata” („The Engineer of the World”), *Dziennik Polski*, Issue 80 (16963), 4 April 2000, p. 12.

⁵ The AGH UST archives, as above (“Stanisław Bishop Dziwisz’s Letter to Rector Ryszard Tadeusiewicz”).

could accommodate only thirty persons. Although I finally managed to convince him to accept thirty three people, it was still a drop in the ocean.

And that was precisely why I had provided more coaches for the AGH UST employees and students who would travel to Rome at their own expense. They were to gather on St. Peter's Square during the conferment ceremony, but the entrance to the general audience with the Pope was guaranteed for them on the following day (Wednesday 4 April 2000). In total, about 250 AGH UST employees and over 100 students set out for Rome.

I will not elaborate on the very conferment of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon the Pope since extensive video footage of that memorable event was taken and it shows the ceremony better than a written account.⁶ At first I read out an abridged version of my *laudatio*.⁷ Then I handed the Pope a diploma printed on parchment, the text of my *laudatio* bound in white veal leather, and the *epitogium*, i.e. a ceremonial sash of the AGH UST colours: green, black and red, trimmed with ermine stripes and embroidered with the AGH UST emblem. I also gave John Paul II a bronze plaque cast at the AGH UST Faculty of Foundry Engineering to commemorate that historic moment.⁸

It is worth quoting the sentence written on the diploma of the AGH UST honorary doctorate handed to the Pontiff during the ceremony:

*The Senate of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow
by virtue of the Resolution of 2 February 2000
conferred the title of the Doctor Honoris Causa
upon His Holiness John Paul II
in recognition of His outstanding contribution
to the dissemination of love and moral order
in all aspects of human existence,*

⁶ It is available on You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LvZIPm_IkQ.

⁷ The full text of my *laudatio* is attached to this article as "The Appendix".

⁸ The commemorative plaque was designed by Karol Badyna, a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow. On the obverse it represented the figure of John Paul II opening the Holy Door slightly; above him, in the upper left and right corners, there could be seen the Pope's coat of arms and the AGH UST emblem. On the reverse the artist depicted the Pope during his visit to the AGH UST (John Paul II against the background of the AGH UST main building). The sculptor also showed the façade of that edifice with the statue of Saint Barbara on the roof. The plaque was inscribed with the words: "The conferment of the title of the AGH UST Doctor honoris causa upon His Holiness John Paul II in Cracow, AD 2000". The plaque was cast at the laboratory of the AGH UST Faculty of the Foundry Engineering. The Rector gave the Pope the plaque marked as "zero"; besides, one hundred numbered copies of the plaque were manufactured; they were handed to the most distinguished visitors of our university.

particularly in building ethical foundations of the technological development.

The deans of all fourteen faculties of the AGH UST and I, as the Rector, put our signatures below this text.

The Pope also entrusted me with his gift for the AGH UST: his majolica portrait.⁹

I am nearing the end of this story.

For many successive years we had taken pride in the fact that we were one of the few universities in the world whose honorary doctorates were held by John Paul II (although I have to admit that during the last years of his life the number of such universities increased). Nevertheless, we rank fourth in this list and apparently will not be overtaken.

In the years following the award ceremony the AGH UST employees paid the Pope several other visits in Rome or Castel Gandolfo, and although those meetings were always joyful and spiritually enriching, their number and duration had to be limited due to the Pope's progressive illness.

In 2005 we were preparing for a formal sitting of the AGH UST Senate during which on 3 April we would celebrate the fifth anniversary of the conferment of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon the Pontiff.

Unfortunately on 2 April 2005 at 9.37 p. m. John Paul II passed away: he "went to the house of the Father".

On the morning of 3 April 2005 I received the terrible news, so, instead of polishing a speech I had prepared for the formal sitting of the Senate (during which we were supposed to rejoice in the fifth anniversary of the award ceremony), or of getting ready to entertain guests (as I have already mentioned, 3 April is my name day), I had to prepare my university for the mourning for the death of the most dignified and eminent member of our academic community. I telephoned Henryk Zioło, the then AGH UST Chief Administrative Officer (at present our Chancellor) and we both personally hung long strips of a black pall over the A-0 façade (from the roof to the ground), so the AGH UST main building was probably the first public edifice in Krakow draped in mourning!

The AGH UST Senate convened on 6 April 2005 and I delivered an improvised speech, we said a prayer, and afterwards each of the members of the Senate lit a candle at the portrait of the Pope hung at the entrance of the Assembly

⁹ The portrait hangs now in front of the Assembly Hall of the A-0 main building at the AGH UST.

Hall. The grief-stricken AGH UST employees and students joined in and very soon a few hundred candles were burning in absolute silence at the entrance to the Hall.

Also our students living on the campus bade the Pope farewell in their own unique way: on the nights of 6/7 April and of 7/8 April they switched their lamps on in selected dormitory windows to form huge light crosses, as tall as more than a dozen floors...

We were all so united!

However, I felt bereft and on the night of 7 April I took a desperate decision to fly to Rome to attend the Pope's funeral. The TV and the media reported that millions of people had arrived in Rome from all over the world, so the streets had become heavily congested, and the journalists claimed that it was next to impossible to reach St. Peter's Square without a special pass (which I had failed to obtain). Regardless of all those obstacles I went to Katowice and, with a few other university rectors, flew to Rome on board a chartered plane.

In Rome, the road from the airport to the centre was impassable, so we got to the outskirts of the city and tried to make our way slowly through the throng towards a distant St. Peter's Basilica. As the police prevented more people from entering the densely crowded St. Peter's Square, we heeded the advice of Professor Ziejka, the Rector of the Jagiellonian University: hiding behind a gate of one of the houses, we put on the ceremonial togas we had wisely taken. Then, treading in a stately manner (with our hearts in our mouths...) we were heading for our destination as the crowd parted and people looked at us and our attire in amazement.

In our unavoidable encounters and squabbles with the local police we could rely on the invaluable assistance of Jerzy Stuhr, an eminent actor and the Rector of the renowned AST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Krakow. Since he fluently spoke Italian, he was able to act out 'genuine' outrage at the fact that someone dared to stop us on our way! More hours of that ghastly night passed and we walked more and more kilometres along the nightmarish route.

At dawn, we reached St. Peter's Square where we were unexpectedly admitted without any passes or invitation cards; instead, we were addressed as "Monsignores" because, as Jerzy Stuhr explained, we had been taken for some church dignitaries of an Eastern Orthodox denomination... If not for that mistake, we would not have gained entry to the Square....

I even managed to get to the first row, so I could hear the rustle of pages of the book laid on the Pope's cedar coffin which the wind was leafing through...

I remained there until the coffin was taken down to the crypt. In that way, I bade the Pope farewell on behalf of the AGH UST community, expressing our gratitude for giving us the honour of having him become one of us...

APPENDIX

The full text of the *laudatio* (a laudatory speech) delivered by me to the Senate of the AGH University of Science and Technology

I have had the honour of composing the *laudatio* related to the conferment of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon His Holiness John Paul II by the AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow. The role of a *laudator* – someone who is supposed to praise and extol the achievements of the recipient of our honorary doctorate – is in this case both easy and difficult. Easy – because the Pope's outstanding merits and accomplishments, commonly known and universally acknowledged, cannot be overestimated and provide a unique opportunity to prepare a laudatory speech in which such compelling and irrefutable arguments would be offered that only sheer pleasure could be derived from their presentation. Difficult – because this very multitude of His Holiness's attainments and countless arguments in favour of the conferment of this (and any other) distinction upon him pose a problem of their **choice** as some of them will be explicitly mentioned here while the others will inevitably be left out. The latter ones, however, engraved on our hearts and minds, are even more numerous and it is also owing to them that we unanimously adopted the motion, put forward by all our faculties, for the award of the most prestigious degree of Doctor Honoris Causa on John Paul II, and we accepted it by standing ovation.

As I am bound to make a choice, I wish to focus here on most salient circumstances and arguments in favour of the conferment of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon His Holiness by the **technical university**. Arriving at our decision we did not consider solely the Pope's enormous and unprecedented contribution to rendering Poland famous all over the world, although we undoubtedly felt in our hearts inexpressible gratitude for that; neither did we weigh only the fact that John Paul II's teachings remain the moral beacon for millions of people across the globe, though we know, appreciate and admire the historic mission of the Pope who, as the Pilgrim of Peace, travels all over the world spreading the

Good Word, the Message of Love and the unshakable Wisdom based on Faith which the contemporary world needs so much.

Our decision was also (or rather: first and foremost) influenced by the fact that here, at the technical university, the Pontiff's teachings are constantly our spiritual mainstay, the benchmark and support in the hardships of our everyday lives. Bearing in mind the profound and long-term consequences of all discoveries in the field of science and technology and their tremendous impact on our civilization this lodestar is indispensable for us as without its light we would easily lose our way and, instead of heading for the technological advances which would serve the man, we might get entangled in the maze of technology which degrades our humanity or even poses a threat to our very existence.

Let us now indicate where exactly in the Pope's teachings we can find the guidelines and wisdom for which we are so thankful and for which we would like to confer the title of the Doctor Honoris Causa on His Holiness, whom we consider the most remarkable Engineer of the World.

Although the knowledge of science and technology that we create and impart on others at our university is, to some extent, unique and has its own internal logic, it shares many common features with any other kind of scientific research since it is the pursuit of the Truth that underlies it. In John Paul II's teachings the notion of truth plays a pivotal role and the encyclicals *Veritatis splendor* and *Fides et ratio* focus mainly on the nature of the truth and the way to discover it. For this reason they serve us as an invaluable set of guidelines and teachings whose acceptance imposes some order on our tools and methods and offers us a choice of the right path in the thickets of potential directions for which our scientific disciplines might head. In the encyclical *Veritatis splendor* we read the words which provide us with penetrating insight into the very essence of scientific cognition: "In the depths of his [man's] heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it. This is eloquently proved by man's tireless search for knowledge in all fields."¹⁰ And, indeed, such are our initial and original motivations, so grasping the very nature of our yearning for truth enables us to channel our efforts into this pursuit. What is more, the Pope gives us hope that our goals are attainable. In the address delivered at the meeting with all the rectors of Polish universities in Toruń on 7 June 1999 the Pontiff said that today "attempts are often made to convince people that we have

¹⁰ The full English text available on: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html (Translator's note)

reached the twilight of the age of certitude in the knowledge of truth, and that we are irrevocably condemned to the total absence of meaning, the provisional nature of all knowledge, and to permanent instability and relativity.”¹¹ By opposing these defeatist views John Paul II offers us a new incentive to “fill the earth and subdue it”¹² by means of scientific cognition. For this encouragement He also deserves our gratitude.

The truths which we discover and practical actions which we teach result from the laws of nature. The latter ones, however, can be fathomed in science and technology only in an incomplete, fragmentary way as we cannot see the wood for the trees: we focus on small details so much that we lose sight of the larger hole. Such a perspective, however, is not favourable to the very essence of scientific cognition, hence we owe His Holiness our profound gratitude for his reminding us that, as scientists and scholars, we are obliged to think in terms of the whole which, as we perfectly know, is more than a sum of its parts. In *Fides et Ratio* the Pope expressed his concern about an increasing fragmentation of knowledge in the contemporary world due to which “many people wonder whether it still makes sense to ask about meaning”.¹³ As we believe that such questions do make sense, we should be grateful to the Pope for drawing our attention to the necessity of asking them and our thanks are expressed by the very award of the honorary doctorate of our university.

Besides the recommendation that we should never lose sight of the whole of a phenomenon or a process in which we conduct our research (being, by its very nature, in-depth and detailed), John Paul II includes in his works numerous other hints on methodology. In the above-quoted encyclical *Fides et Ratio* the Pope encourages us not to content ourselves with superficial empiricism, but to go further, “transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.”¹⁴ It is an enormous challenge, especially in the sciences which deal with the particular and concrete. Nevertheless, because this task is assigned to us by the Pontiff, we shall go to great lengths to fulfill it.

¹¹ *Address at Meeting with Rectors of Academic Institutions*, available on: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1999/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19990607_torun.html (Translator’s note)

¹² Genesis 1:28 (Translator’s note).

¹³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html (Translator’s note).

¹⁴ *Ibidem.* (Translator’s note).

Working in the field of science and technology we do not confine ourselves to comprehending the reality, but also seek ways to transform it and make it useful to man. Our efforts in the field of applied sciences, their use in industry and their benefits for the economy are appreciated by the Pope; this recognition is clearly visible at the beginning of another encyclical *Laborem exercens* where we read: "Through work man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society within which he lives in community with those who belong to the same family."¹⁵ We interpret this sentence, so close to us, as a vision of the unity and homogeneity of technological advancement which result from our work and which may enable the cultural and humanistic advancement of our community to emerge.

It is only at first glance that the Pope's versatile teaching and writing activity, referring to faith and spirituality and concerning moral notions and values, could be deemed very remote from technology. In fact John Paul II indicates us new paths towards the future -also in technology -by his teaching and pastoral service which encompass all spheres of human life. Doing so he also strengthens our spirit so that we could use our creativity in an appropriate way. However, when we examine the main issues raised in the Pope's works, we may have an impression that the problems explored by the humanities, and even the sciences, appear to preoccupy him more than the complexity of research in the field of technology.

Such judgement would be definitely incomplete since the issues related to technology do not escape the Pontiff's attention, but, in a sense, recede into the background whereas more urgent and fundamental solutions in the field of humanities have to be achieved in the face of abrupt and radical changes which occur in the contemporary world. If we attentively listen to John Paul II's words and carefully read the texts of his encyclicals and homilies, we will easily find the passages related to science and technology. As one of numerous examples of such excerpts let me quote the Pope's speech to the professors of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (10 November 1979) where he voiced his concern: "The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces."¹⁶ Who would put more aptly and concisely our main concern in the field of technologies? Also,

¹⁵ http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html (Translator's note).

¹⁶ It is actually a quotation from *Redemptor Hominis*: available on: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html (Translators' note)

another extract from his writings should be cited here: “Technology without ethic turns into the foe of man, but built on ethical foundations it comes to man’s assistance in shaping the world and himself.”¹⁷

These dispersed pieces of papal wisdom referring to science and technology are even more valuable as they have to be “extracted” and collected like precious gems when we study intently John Paul II’s numerous works and discern their further dimensions. The Pope’s thoughts on technology are worth being searched for as, despite the fact that they are sometimes difficult to find in his immense oeuvre comprising many texts on a multitude of topics, they may serve us as invaluable help in identifying **appropriate** research aims and teaching goals among a large number of those which are **achievable** but do not **deserve** to be achieved.

Although we do know that technology itself is morally neutral, because its negative consequences can result solely from the wrong use of scientific discoveries and technological development, it does not mean that we, as trailblazers and innovators in science, are exempted from asking the most difficult questions and seeking answers to them. In our moral reflection on technological advancement and research findings we need a firm and reliable foothold beyond science and technology –and we gratefully find such anchorage in John Paul II’s wisdom which he shared with us on so many occasions.

As early as in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, written shortly after his election to the papal throne (4 March 1979) the Pontiff expressed his worries in the following words: “Do all the conquests attained until now and those projected for the future for technology accord with man’s moral and spiritual progress? [...] In men and among men is there [...] an increase of [...] the propensity to exploit the whole of material progress and that in the technology of production for the exclusive purpose of dominating others [...]?”¹⁸ This sad reflection on technology and the consequences of its development ends with a statement which is still relevant today: “The development of technology and the development of contemporary civilization, which is marked by the ascendancy of technology, demand a proportional development of morals and ethics.”¹⁹

¹⁷ My translation (Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska); if the source of a translated quotation is not provided in a footnote, the extract has been translated from the Polish by me. (Translator’s note)

¹⁸ Op. cit.: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html (Translator’s note)

¹⁹ Ibidem.

It seems an enormously valuable and penetrating thought as indeed, our concern is also to aid the development of the world, stimulated by the advances in sciences and technological progress, in such a way that it could head for “the civilization for men”, not “against men.” We care for this process and consider it one of the major imperatives in our actions, yet we are aware that our professional qualifications are definitely not enough to avoid all dangers and pitfalls of technological advancement. Our knowledge and wisdom will obviously not suffice in all possible situations to come up with appropriate answers to such “what” questions as what we ought to do, what we should shun, and, first and foremost, from what we need to protect other people, even if that would mean the abandonment of the findings of the research we have already conducted. For a technician, an engineer or a researcher in the field of exact sciences a “how” question arises as natural and understandable. We are able to find answers to the questions on how to solve specific technical problems, how to build a given machine or how to acquire and hone skills necessary to manufacture a product. However, we are unfamiliar with the methods which would enable us to reply to “if” questions: if one should strive at constructing this or that machine, or if the product of the technology we have created would serve people, or, on the contrary, will pose a threat to them.

John Paul II leaves no doubt about his views on this matter when he writes (in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*): “If this technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become potential destroyer of the human race.”²⁰ The key issue here is to find the reason for technological advancement – and find it beyond technology as such and beyond pragmatism or economics (“a merely utilitarian end”). Such an objective was established by the Pope on 9 June 1987 during his meeting with the men and women of culture in the Aula Magna of the Catholic University of Lublin: “Man is the only **subject** in the world of **objects** because he is capable of objective cognition of everything that surrounds him, and because, thanks to his mind, he is ‘by nature’ truth-oriented. And it is in truth where we may find the source of man’s transcendence towards the universe in which he lives.” Technology should conform with this subjectivity which is an intrinsic quality of man. It is its primary aim to which all the others should be subordinated. If we treat this Pope’s thought as our signpost and a point of reference, it would

²⁰ http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html (Translator’s note).

be much easier for us to properly evaluate the specific actions and decisions taken in science and technology.

An even more basic and direct guideline can be found in the Pontiff's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* in a revealing sentence: "Seen in this light, reason is valued without being overvalued. The results of reasoning may in fact be true, but these results acquire their true meaning only if they are set within the larger horizon of faith."²¹ The conclusion that follows from this statement is that the real value of a scientific achievement cannot be estimated solely in terms of a "true / false" criterion, or the logical coherence of a scientific system which we have devised. Knowledge acquires a proper dimension only when we correlate its fruits with the **values** more permanent and unperishable than the whole system of **science**. This guideline is particularly useful, even priceless, for all researchers responsible for scientific and technological achievements which are (potentially) able to transform the lives of whole communities. We should note that all major discoveries owing to which civilization and progress took new directions, such as the discovery of nuclear energy, the invention of electronic devices, the advent of modern communication systems, and many others, were rooted in science and technology. That is why the Pope's arguments expounded at the meeting with the professors of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (10 November 1979) appeal so strongly to us: "Applied science has already rendered man immense services and will render them in the future on condition that it is inspired by love and directed by wisdom and courage which will safeguard it against the interference of tyrannical rule. Applied science ought to ally itself with the conscience to form a triple alliance which will ensure the genuine good to man whom it should serve."

An abundance of specific and valuable guidelines may be found in the homily delivered on 15 November 1980 at the meeting with the representatives of the academic communities in the Federal Republic of Germany when the Pontiff said: "Scientific learning led to profound and far-reaching changes in technology. As a result man's living conditions on the planet have changed to an incredible extent and considerably improved. Progress in scientific knowledge has become a driving force of general cultural progress and the technological transformation of the world has seemed to many the purpose and meaning of science. Meanwhile, it turned out that the civilizational progress does not always improve the

²¹ Ibidem.

living conditions. There are some unintended and unforeseen consequences which may prove dangerous and fatal.”

Who knows better than we, the researchers responsible for the development of cutting edge technologies, how apt this diagnosis is, and who needs such words more than we do? Therefore, when in the same homily we read the statements quoted below, we find in them the justification of our bold idea to consider His Holiness, the Greatest Humanist and Moralist of the world, also the Great Engineer, or, as it has previously been suggested, the Engineer of the World: “Scientific learning may serve both good and evil purposes. [...] Technological knowledge aimed at transforming the world is justified by the service to man and humanity.”

An engineer means a person who does not accept the existing world, but wishes to transform it by his or her creative work. The Pontiff thoroughly approves of such an attitude when he says in the same homily: “One cannot say that progress has gone too far as long as many people, or even whole nations, live in humiliating and degrading conditions which might be improved by means of our scientific knowledge and technology.” But, as a moralist and spiritual guide, the Pontiff adds a significant reservation: “It is the dignity of the human person that is the pivot of all cultural applications of scientific knowledge.”

This is a key statement: drawing on the Pope’s wisdom we, the employees of the AGH University of Science and Technology, may overcome all kinds of barriers and limitations, especially those inherent in ourselves or rather in our ambition to excel in the field of technology regardless of its long term consequences. Both good and bad things may stem from technology and John Paul II seems to share this view.

In his encyclical *Laborem excercens* he openly expresses his appreciation for modern technological advancement and its impact on the contemporary civilizational progress, saying: “The development of industry and of the various sectors connected with it, even the most modern electronics technology, especially in the fields of miniaturization, communications and telecommunications and so forth, shows how vast is the role of technology, that ally of work that human thought has produced, in the interaction between the subject and object of work (in the widest sense of the word). Understood in this case not as a capacity or aptitude for work, but rather as a whole set of instruments which man uses in his work, technology is undoubtedly man’s ally. It facilitates his work, perfects, accelerates and augments it. It leads to an

increase in the quantity of things produced by work, and in many cases improves their quality.”²²

In the same encyclical, however, the Pontiff makes a firm and accurate diagnosis of the threats posed by the uncontrolled civilizational progress accelerated by the technological advances: “However, it is also a fact that, in some instances, technology can cease to be man’s ally and become almost his enemy, as when the mechanization of work „supplants” him, taking away all personal satisfaction and the incentive to creativity and responsibility, when it deprives many workers of their previous employment, or when, through exalting the machine, it reduces man to the status of its slave.”²³

In his insightful remarks John Paul II unveils the roots of evil which is not immanent in technology as such, but may be caused by such exploitation of its achievements which dismisses humanistic values: “The recent stage of human history, especially that of certain societies, brings a correct affirmation of technology as a basic coefficient of economic progress; but, at the same time, this affirmation has been accompanied by and continues to be accompanied by the raising of essential questions concerning human work in relationship to its subject, which is man. These questions are particularly charged with content and tension of an ethical and an ethical and social character.”²⁴ I strongly believe that the quotation itself truly justifies the conferment of the title of the Doctor Honoris Causa by our technical university upon the Pope as our Teacher.

There are more instances of such quotations: on 25 February 1981, in his address to scientists and representatives of the United Nations University in Hiroshima, the Pope said: “The people of our time possess, in the first place, tremendous scientific and technological resources [...] these resources could be far more effectively used for the development and growth of peoples [...] If all the rich nations of the world wanted to, they could call in an impressive number of specialists for the tasks of development. All of this obviously presupposes political choices, and, more fundamentally, moral options. The moment is approaching when priorities will have to be redefined. For example, it has been estimated that about a half of the world’s research-workers are at present

²² http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html (Translator’s note)

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Ibidem.

employed for military purposes. Can the human family morally go on much longer in this direction?"²⁵

In the above passage the Pope's thoughts are so lucidly presented that they leave no doubt as for their message: according to His Holiness moral choices and dilemmas are an intrinsic aspect of technological advancement and this fact imposes on us certain obligations, so we would benefit from listening carefully to another excerpt from this significant speech: "Science and technology have always formed part of man's culture, but today we are witnessing the speedily increasing growth of a technology which seems to have destroyed its equilibrium with the dimensions of culture by acting as an element of division. [...] Science and technology are the most dynamic factors of the development of society today, but their intrinsic limitations do not make them capable, by themselves, of providing a power that will bind culture together. How, then, can a culture absorb science and technology, with their dynamism, without losing its own identity?"²⁶

Being extremely knowledgeable about the human nature and its weakness, John Paul II indicates three sources of evil: three imperatives or, as the Pope puts it, "three temptations." By identifying and naming them The Pontiff helps us to make such a choice of goals of technology and methods of attaining them which may prevent us from leading science and civilizational progress astray and from making them devoid of humanistic values. Let us listen to the Pope's words: "There are three temptations to be avoided in this regard. The first is the temptation to pursue technological development for its own sake, the sort of development that has for its only norm that of its own growth and affirmation, as if it were a matter of an independent reality in between nature and a reality that is properly human, imposing on man the inevitable realization of his ever new possibilities, as if one should always do what is technically possible."²⁷

We know it only too well: the technological advancement whose sole aim is further technological advancement leads to a typical vicious circle, even more dangerous when the ambition to achieve everything achievable is involved, regardless of the fact whether the end product might serve to elevate people to a higher level of freedom, or whether the end product would be another tool to enslave us.

²⁵ Available on: <http://inters.org/john-paul-ii-hiroshima-university> (Translator's note)

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem.

Further arguments by the Pope also hit the mark and expose the real motivation behind the development of anti-humanistic technology, providing us with clear guidelines on which path to take and which one to avoid. At the same meeting, at United Nations University in Hiroshima, the Pontiff continued his line of reasoning: “The second temptation is that of subjecting technological development to economic usefulness in accordance with the logic of profit or nonstop economic expansion, thus creating advantages for some while leaving others in poverty, with no care for the true common good of humanity, making technology into an instrument at the service of the ideology of „having”²⁸.

How often is the economic calculation the only criterion for evaluating technological achievements! John Paul II makes us realize that the profit criterion is not and cannot be the sole one, and that is why his words are so close and important to us. Even more relevant are his guidelines and remarks disclosing the dark corners of the human soul which we should always take into account in all our activities in the field of technology: “Thirdly, there is also the temptation to subject technological development to the pursuit or maintenance of power, as happens when it is used for military purposes, and whenever people are manipulated in order that they may be dominated.”²⁹ The conclusion seems to follow that it is an illusion to think that while creating new technologies and manufacturing methods we ought to focus merely on their intended applications without worrying about the potential ways of misusing them. At the moment of developing a new technological system only its creator may be aware of its potential for good and for evil. That is why whenever we conduct our research we should all bear in mind the Pontiff’s words: “You will succeed in your task if you restate with conviction that ‘science and technology find their justification in the service that they render to man and to humanity’; and that rational science must be linked with a series of spheres of knowledge open wide to spiritual values.”³⁰ If the Pope’s wisdom constantly accompanies us in our engineering work, technology shall bring fewer undesired surprises and shall become what we would like it to be, namely, the driving force behind humanity: the latter should strive for perfection though the road ahead is still long and winding.

Therefore, as we would like John Paul II’s reflections and ethical guidelines to be constantly present in all engineering achievements at the AGH University

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Available on: <http://inters.org/john-paul-ii-hiroshima-university> (Translator’s note).

of Science and Technology, we decided to bestow the title of the Doctor Honoris Causa of our university upon His Holiness, the Engineer of the World.³¹

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³¹ The AGH-UST archives: *The Senate Documents*