



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARD. JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN
ON THE OCCASION OF THE COLLOQUIUM
"CULTURE, REASON AND FREEDOM"***

*To Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran
Archivist and Librarian of Holy Roman Church*

Please be kind enough to convey my cordial greetings to all the people who are taking part in the Colloquium "*Culture, reason and freedom*". It is being held in Paris to commemorate the Visit on 2 June 1980 to the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) of my Predecessor, Pope John Paul II. I wish to greet in particular Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO, as I remember that the organization is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. I also greet Mr Michael Omolewa, President of the General Conference of UNESCO, all their collaborators and all the persons accredited to this institution.

Today we can be deeply grateful to Pope John Paul II, who always stressed in his teachings, backed by his strong personal and cultural experience, man's central and irreplaceable position together with his fundamental dignity, the source of his inalienable rights. Twenty-five years ago, the Pope declared at the headquarters of UNESCO that "in the cultural field, man is always the first fact: man is the prime and fundamental fact of culture" (*Address to UNESCO*, 2 June 1980, n. 8; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 23 June 1980, p. 9).

Was not one of the key points of the Reflection he addressed to this "aeropagus... of intelligence and consciences", as he described his audience, a reminder to each one of its members of his responsibility: "construct peace, beginning with the foundation: *respect for all the rights of man*, those which are connected with his material and economic dimension as well as those which are connected with the spiritual and interior dimension of his existence in the world" (*ibid.* n. 22, p.

12)?

To proclaim the Gospel's liberating newness to every human person, to reach out to him in all that makes up his life and expresses his humanity, is the Church's ongoing challenge. This mission, received by the Church from her Lord, basically corresponds with your initiative and highly justifies the desire that the Holy See has always had to take part, through the presence of a Permanent Observer, in your reflections and commitment. This is what the Catholic Church will continue to do, mobilizing her own forces which are first and foremost spiritual, to contribute to the good of human beings in all the dimensions of their being.

In a world at the same time many-faceted and enlightened but also subjected to the pressing demands of the globalization of economic relations and especially of information, it is of the utmost importance to mobilize the energies of intelligence so that the human person's right to education and culture may be recognized everywhere, particularly in the poorest countries.

In this world where men and women must learn increasingly to recognize and respect their brothers and sisters, the Church wants to make her own contribution to serving the human community by shedding more and more light on the relationship that unites each person to the Creator of all life and is the basis of the inalienable dignity of every human being, from conception to natural death.

I greet the members of the university community and the teachers who are taking part in this Colloquium. I would like once again to express to them the Church's trust and encourage them to persevere in their demanding and exalting task at the service of truth.

I invite all those taking part in this Colloquium to put into practice a real cultural policy in order to preserve cultural identities that are often threatened by relations with economic and political forces, and also to foster human cultural expression in all the dimensions of the person's being.

As I cordially greet all the Religious and civil personages present at this meeting, I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of divine Blessings upon everyone.

From the Vatican, 24 May 2005

BENEDICT XVI

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