

the person existing and acting together with others does so as a person.”<sup>13</sup> The person acts together with others whenever there is a goal common to all the members of a given community: a goal so important to all of them that its achievement releases their multidimensional potential and creativity. The fundamental, authentic attitude expressive of this kind of participation is solidarity, which allows the subject not only to contribute to the accomplishment of the external common good, but also to become fulfilled as a person. It is through this kind of participation that community is formed. Therefore, „the *goal* of common acting, when understood in a purely objective and ‘material’ way, though it includes some elements of the common good and has reference to it, can never fully and completely constitute it. ... It also, or even primarily, consists in that which conditions and somehow initiates in the persons acting together their participation, and thereby develops and shapes in them a subjective community of acting.”<sup>14</sup>

THE ESSENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY  
A CONCERTED SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Beginning his address, of June 9, 1987, to the men and women of culture gathered in the Aula Magna of the Catholic University of Lublin (it was the first so important a meeting of the Pope with the scholarly community in Poland), John Paul confessed: “The memory of what the university is—Alma Mater—I still carry alive with me. Not only the memory, but also a sense of debt that must be paid with one’s life.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Karol Wojtyła’s studies at the Jagiellonian University and at the Cracow seminary, his teaching at the Faculty of Theology at the Jagiellonian University, then the period of post-graduate research at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas *Angelicum*, and, finally, almost a quarter of a century’s work at the Catholic University of Lublin made it possible for him to acquire a deep knowledge of the academic world and to form a strong commitment to the scholarly community. It can be said that although the words he addressed to this community during his apostolic visit of 1987 flowed from the bottom of his heart, they were also grounded in his vast academic experience. The Pope raised a great number of issues related to the role of the university and to its mission. Here, I shall

<sup>13</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 269.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 281.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, “Jakie są perspektywy tego pokolenia?” Address to the men and women of culture in the *Aula Magna* of the Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin, June 9, 1987, *L’Osservatore Romano*, Polish Edition, 8, no. 5 (90) (1987): 11. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are translated by Elżbieta Drozdowska.

focus only on his statements concerning the formation of the human person and of the community of people within the structures of the university. However, before I refer to the Pope's speeches on this topic, I would like to recall some truths, seemingly banal in their obviousness, which are nevertheless important for realizing the meaning of John Paul II's appeals.

The first of these banal yet important truths is that it is usually young people who leave their family homes and go to universities to study. Other people who have taken care of them so far, such as parents, teachers, educators, and not infrequently catechists, are no longer responsible for their lives, for the stages of their personal development to come, or for their further education. Young people begin to create their 'life projects' more independently, e.g., by choosing an area of studies, making new friends, and developing relationships which sometimes end up with marriage, or thinking about their future employment. In fact, they also choose, directly or indirectly, the system of values they will follow in their lives. Another important thing, however banal it might seem, is that to study means to engage in the process of learning truth: good students become naturally fascinated by the search for truth and they find joy in discovering it, while participation in this common pursuit shapes their minds and characters. At the same time, however, some students, as much as scholars, might be tempted to succumb to external pressures and abandon their selfless attitudes in research in favor of projects or study curricula improving their chances of financial prosperity in the future or media success. Higher education provides the human being with a great opportunity to reach his or her maturity as a rational being and to build deep and lasting bonds with others thus actualizing his or her participation in the community. Yet it is only an opportunity and whether a student will take full advantage of it depends on the atmosphere the university creates, as well as on his or her attitude. I believe this is the context in which we need to read John Paul II's numerous addresses to academic communities in which he emphasized the fundamental mission of the university. At the risk of inevitable simplifications, I shall now attempt to bring to the fore some of the appeals the Pope made in those speeches.