



Cultural Center

Media and Religion

A discussion on the ever-growing attention of TV, newspapers, and magazines on religious topics

Speakers: **Msgr. Lorenzo ALBACETE**—Theologian, author, columnist
Mr. Peter STEINFELS—*New York Times* religion columnist
Ms. Helen WHITNEY—Award-winning TV producer for ABC and PBS

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Fordham University, Pope Auditorium
113 West 60th Street, New York

Crossroads: Good evening, and welcome on behalf of Crossroads Cultural Center. We would like to thank the co-sponsor of tonight's event, the Department of Communication and Media Studies at Fordham University, and Radius, the Fordham student club that helped organize it. As you know, the topic of discussion is "Media and Religion," which of course is broad enough to include many possible aspects, such as why the media cover religion the way they do, how they could do better, how we can help them and so on. We are very pleased to have three distinguished panelists who can speak of these matters, not just academically, but out of their own personal and professional experience. In fact, this is what we are most interested in—learning from these three remarkable people, each deeply engaged both with the media and with religion, what they have learned from their experiences, their struggles, their successes and, we suppose, even their failures. Having said that, we would like to offer just one simple observation that may help start the discussion.

Clearly, "religion" has been a very hot topic in the media these last few years. The catalysts of this interest are well-known: domestically, the important social and political role of the so-called "religious right" externally, the role of political Islam as a global ideology, especially after 9/11. These phenomena seem to have generated among many people working in the media a renewed awareness of "religion." What is striking, though, is that the coverage is almost never about religion *per se*. Rather, it is mostly about religion as a function of something else. Religion as a political motivator, religion as a source of social values, religion as a cultural marker, religion in relationship to science, religion and the "clash of civilizations," and so on and so forth. But the reality of religion itself is rarely explored, and religious ideas and experiences are not considered newsworthy by themselves. Few seem to suspect that "religion" as a general concept only goes so far, that people do share the same questions but that the answers can be very different and interesting. Paradoxically, one reason why some people in the media are not genuinely interested in the world of "religions" (plural) is because they hardly grasp what "religion" (singular) is about, namely the deeper questions and needs that make us human, that level of our experience that Msgr. Giussani called "the religious sense." To refer back to another Crossroads

discussion from a few months ago, what we face is the reduction of faith to sentiment. Once again, what seems to be called for is that “broadening of reason” that Benedict XVI proposed in his Regensburg address. I will now let Msgr. Albacete do the introductions.

Albacete: I keep looking for the third panelist. I am not the third panelist. I don’t know a damn thing about this type of thing, and my participation is Mickey Mouse stuff, but I do know what I would like to experience tonight, what I would like to get out of this, which Rita has explained. Not to listen to academic lectures about what is a fascination subject. You can imagine how much can be discussed and written about media and religion. Not even a journalistic account of how things stand in the encounter between these two worlds, but the experience of two people who are definitely moved by interest in the religious phenomenon as such, who have escaped what Rita has described as seeing religion only in terms of the effects it has. These are people who understand that all of that is fascinating and interesting, but that the real interesting question is, what is the nature of the religious experience itself? What meaning does it have in human life? Second, our two guests are absolutely professional. They are the top in their experience—the religion editor of *The New York Times*, and with a history before that of commitment and absolute integrity, and Helen Whitney, whose documentaries have been praised precisely because of this professionalism, not only in terms of the television world of PBS, the *New York Times* of the television world, but for the content, the professionalism and integrity of the content. I have my experience because I have worked with Helen on various projects, and I assure you, it’s horrible! The way she treats you is terrible, and I hope tonight to pay her back! In the end you get to hate religion and everything that has to do with it. But I can sit there and hate it but really absolutely admire her integrity. With that in mind we will listen to experience and then we can ask some questions, and at the end I hope to, if I am able, present a little synthesis of what tonight might mean for us in the future.

First we will hear from Professor Peter Steinfels, and I will just read here his claims to fame. He is co-director of the Fordham University Center on Religion and Culture. He just comes from two floors up. He’s a university professor at Fordham. Many more of you know him as a religion columnist for *The New York Times*. He’s the former editor of *Commonweal* magazine, he has previously been a visiting professor at Georgetown, at Dayton and at Notre Dame; he has a PhD in history from Columbia, and has written numerous books, articles and essays.

I might as well read Helen’s too. Helen Whitney has worked as a producer, director, and writer for documentaries and feature films since 1971. Her documentary work has appeared on ABC’s “Closeup” and PBS’s American Masters, as well as on FRONTLINE. Her documentaries have ranged over a wide variety of subjects, among them: youth gangs, (that is not the one in which I appeared!) presidential candidates, the mentally ill, a Trappist Monastery, (that I saw, it’s fascinating), Pope John Paul II, the class structure of Great Britain, homosexuals, and the photographer Richard Avedon. Whitney maintains a passionate personal interest in the religious journey. Her 90-minute ABC News “Closeup” documentary, “The Monastery,” about the Cistercians in Spencer, Mass., left her searching for other projects about spiritual life. This passion was also evident in FRONTLINE’s “John Paul II: The Millennial Pope”, a film for which she and her team conducted more than 800 interviews in six countries. Whitney’s documentaries and features have received many honors, including an Emmy Award, a Peabody Award, an Oscar nomination, the Humanitas Award, and the prestigious duPont-Columbia Journalism Award.

First we will hear from Peter, and then Helen, and then I will close up the show.

Steinfels: Thank you very much, Monsignor, and thanks to Crossroads for giving me this opportunity to speak to you and to share a platform, an event with Helen Whitney. I'll tell a few stories and make a few observations and I hope we'll have time for questions and discussion.

In the spring of 1994, one year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, a Jewish settler born in Brooklyn opened fire in Hebron, massacring Muslim worshipers. Not long afterward, a man driving a car on the Brooklyn Bridge began shooting into a van full of Hasidic students, critically wounding several and killing one. Before the day was out, Grand Central Station, the El Al terminal at JFK, and Lubavitcher headquarters on Eastern Parkway had to be temporarily closed down.

Marble Collegiate Church in Manhattan brought together Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders to preach and pray for an end to hatred and violence. I attended the Sunday service as a reporter. It was very moving. But one moment sticks in my memory. A clergyman denounced the news media for its coverage of these bloody, tragic events. Suddenly, in the morning's deepest show of shared emotion, the entire religiously-mixed congregation broke into prolonged and fervent applause.

What was going on? Had it been journalists who opened fire on the Brooklyn Bridge or mowed people down in Hebron or parked an explosive-packed truck beneath the Trade Towers? And then I thought, not without some bitterness, okay, if you need a scapegoat to bring antagonistic faiths together, maybe we journalists should volunteer for the job.

People ask, what will ever unite religious groups? Well, one candidate is hostility to the media. Many religious people seem to view the media with a loathing once reserved for Satan, who no longer appears with horns and a spiked tail but with a reporter's notebook, a tape recorder, or a TV camera.

Now media, as you students of grammar and of Latin know, are plural. When we talk about religion and media, are we talking about news reporting, TV sitcoms, serial dramas, documentary films, bestselling books, or popular music? About Bill Moyers or Bill Maher? About NBC, PBS, MTV, or HBO?

I will speak this evening only about news coverage, from my own experience as a religion reporter for *The New York Times* for a decade, with a few passes here and there of work in television.

Of course, before I was a reporter, I had been among the reported. As an editor at *Commonweal* in the 1980s I received a call from a young business reporter who had been assigned to do a piece on the American Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on the U.S. economy. She quickly interrupted my attempt at a highly nuanced evaluation.

"Excuse me," she said, "what exactly is a bishop?"

My later decade as a religion reporter made me more sympathetic to a business reporter ordered to parachute into unfamiliar territory. I also realized how fundamentally impossible even the more specialized religion reporter's job assignment is.

Think of it in terms of sports reporting. Imagine that a lone reporter—and it is the exceptional paper like *The Times* that actually has two on the religion beat—was expected to cover all sports, from baseball and

boxing to yachting and stock-car racing, from soccer to tennis to ski-jumping, with responsibility for knowing all the rulebooks, teams, outstanding performers, all the history and lore and behind-the-scenes squabbles; was expected to cover the weekly events but also the Olympics, Super Sunday, the Indianapolis 500, the Stanley Cup, the Tour de France, and the Kentucky Derby—and of course the legal battles, the contract talks, the doping scandals, and ticket sales.

With our dozens of significant religious groups in the U.S. and with hundreds of small ones, actually thousands, that is what we expect of religion reporters.

Many of them strive hard to overcome their inevitable lack of knowledge. That effort was one of the most exciting parts of my job at *The New York Times*, but I knew that I would always fall short.

On the other hand, news editors, who make final decisions on the allotment of space and time, can hardly be expected to become expert on the multiple forms of religion in the U.S. Some are the stereotypical skeptics who believe religion is a pious fraud and usually don't have to reach far for evidence. Many others are believers who pray and worship with some regularity, but whose exposure and knowledge remain limited, usually to the faith of their upbringing.

My opening story dated from March 1994. That same year, *Commonweal* magazine marked its 70th anniversary with a series of forums in Washington, New York, and Chicago on "Religion and the Media."

At one of them, E.J. Dionne, the syndicated *Washington Post* columnist and Georgetown professor who was a panelist last evening at the forum organized by the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture on religion, morality, media, and the presidential race, recalled covering one of John Paul II's trips to Africa for the *New York Times*.

E.J. had arrived in a town in Cameroon ahead of the pope. It was pouring rain. It had been pouring rain for six days. E.J. began interviewing people including a bright young man who identified himself as a practicing Catholic. He assured E.J. that it would not rain on the pope. "How do you know this?" E.J. asked him. And the young man replied, "Because the rain doctors told me."

Of course the story got better. The pope's plane eventually landed, the crowds cheered, the door opened, and suddenly it stopped raining. The papal Mass followed and the sun beamed. Mass ended, more cheers, the pope got back on the plane, and the heavens opened with another downpour. The young man spotted E.J. on the press platform and rushed up with a huge smile on his dripping face. He pointed to the heavens, and said, "See, see, I told you so."

E.J. began his report in *The Times* with this sentence. "It was not clear who had done the work, but someone was clearly on the job."

He often told journalism students this story to remind them that covering religion might require the capacity to view the world with a different set of assumptions—whether of Catholicism or animism or some interesting combination of the two—than workaday journalism normally employs.

I had much the same reaction in 1992 when my wife and I were in North Carolina taking a few days

away when I received an urgent call from the National News Desk telling me that Our Lady was scheduled to appear in Cold Spring, Kentucky, across the Ohio River and nine miles south of Cincinnati, and I had better find a plane to get me there quickly.

Now historically speaking the Blessed Virgin has tended not to announce her public appearances in advance. In this case, word of the forthcoming apparition seems to have radiated widely from one of the nation's Marian hot spots. There were fears of chaos, crowds, and traffic jamming Route 27, the key highway running through Cold Spring. The governor was reportedly on the verge of calling out the National Guard. So off I went. But not before calling the National Desk and saying, "You guys had better send a photographer. You know damn well that if I file a story declaring 'Mary, the mother of Jesus, appeared last night in Kentucky,' you won't know whether to print it or not."

How should the news media cover the supernatural, whether rain doctors in Africa, Marian apparitions in Kentucky, or miracles advanced in the cause of canonizations? The question brings to mind a set of differences that Avery Dulles once proposed to explain some of the tensions between the Catholic church—or religious faiths generally—and the news media.

Religion centers on a mystery to be approached in a posture of reverence. The new media are investigative, iconoclastic, and poised to expose falsehoods, and hypocrisies. Religion, convinced that its message is permanently valid, shuns innovation. The news media live off novelty. Religion seeks commitment. The news media pride themselves on neutrality. Religion seeks to reconcile or at least to suppress discord. The news media stress conflict. Religion deals with interior matters. The news media look to the tangible. Religious bodies are frequently hierarchical and authoritative. The news media see themselves as democratic and questioning. Religious teaching is often complex and subtle. The news media want things short and simple.

I think some of these characterizations should be qualified. Still they tell us why the tensions are not likely to disappear.

The tensions are illustrated by another story E.J. recounted from John Paul's trip to Africa. The pope "was touching down everywhere," E.J. said. "It was like covering a presidential campaign in October." One morning the press corps was handed a big packet of papal texts. "Having read it through," E.J. recalled, "one of my colleagues ... looked up with alarm and said, 'What are we going to write about? There's nothing but religion here.'"

So what is a religion story? Evidently not one in which the pope merely talks about religion! On the other hand, as E.J. observed ironically, "If the pope speaks about politics, it's a good story. If he speaks about sex, it's a great story." A reporter for one of the wire services told E.J. that anytime she managed to file a story with the two words 'pope' and 'sex' in the first sentence, it was guaranteed to appear in every paper across America.

Years ago, Paul Moses, once the religion writer and then the city editor for New York *Newsday*, wrote something I've quoted so often that I should refer to it as the Law of Moses. "Religion coverage," he said, "focuses on the continuing cultural war over such topics as homosexuality, abortion, AIDS, and contraception." (He could probably put in a few more topics if he were saying that today.) Moses compared this focus to "covering major league baseball only when there was a dispute about allowing

women to be umpires.” And this certainly coincides with some of the introductory remarks this evening.

I mentioned the wire services. When it comes to what many people know about papal words and actions, no cardinal, theologian, or Vatican official has as much power as the veteran Rome correspondents for the wire services. If they can't get “sex” into the lead paragraph along with “pope” they often find an equivalent.

When Pope Benedict issued a lengthy reflection on the Eucharist, Reuters reported it under the headline, “Politicians Bound by Church Teachings, Pope Says,” with the lead sentence, “The Church’s teachings on gay marriage, abortion and euthanasia are ‘non-negotiable,’ a papal document said.”

This was based on two sentences—which, by the way, also included “promotion of the common good in all its forms” among the non-negotiable values—in a 130-page document addressing Eucharistic theology, liturgy, devotion, and spirituality.

Not only does such a wire service story appear unaltered in many papers, but editors with correspondents in Rome or religion writers at home query them, what’s this about politicians and Church teachings?

The evening news broadcasts, which have neither the time nor the expertise to read through a lengthy theological document, inevitably use the wire service angle in their reports.

Three quarters of the way through Pope Benedict’s profound encyclical on hope, he discussed 19th- and 20th-century atheism as a misguided moral protest against the injustices of the world and history. The Reuters story put this criticism of atheism into the opening paragraph as though the encyclical was primarily an attack on atheism. Aha—the pope was getting into the ring with Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and other exponents of the so-called New Atheism.

Of course, this was utter nonsense. It misrepresented the entire encyclical. It did not even give an accurate impression of what Benedict had said about atheism. But when an evening news broadcast sent a camera and interviewer to get my comment on the encyclical at about 4 or 4:30 in the afternoon, I knew that they would be relying not on the papal text but the wire service story. “This is an encyclical about hope, not about atheism,” I said into the camera. “Atheism is mentioned only in passing and very late in the message.” I did not expect, however, that my statement would be the Steinfelds sound bite to make it on the air, and I was not wrong. They had, after all, already filmed footage with a spokesman for the New York Society of Atheists, all eager for a fight but who may have himself been relying on the wire service story.

Religious leaders know that to speak to a Spanish, Swahili, or Arab culture, they had better speak Spanish, Swahili, or Arabic. Likewise, if we live in a media culture, religious leaders must know how to speak media. Someone has to tell the pope that quoting an obscure passage about Muhammad from a 14th-century Byzantine emperor may be fascinating to his academic audience but have enormous reverberations in the Islamic world. If American bishops want people to believe that are not telling Catholics how to vote, then they will have to come up with a different media strategy.

Some church leaders do understand the language of media, although there is also a growing corps of

religious spin doctors.

But more about that later. I began by proposing that media-bashing may be our strongest hope for religious unity. I argued that the religion reporters' job was essentially impossible. I suggested that the different assumptions underlying religious faiths and news reporting guaranteed that the tensions between them would never disappear. I focused on one distorting assumption that often operates in coverage of religion, namely what defines a story in the first place. And I concluded on the need for religious leaders to speak media in a media age.

I hope that will give us something to talk about. Thank you very much.

Albacete: Alright. Do you want to say something first?

Whitney: We're going to watch 20 minutes of the end of a documentary I've done, and I think a number of you in the audience have seen it, *John Paul II*. Lorenzo is a large presence in the film and you'll recognize him. The reason I've done it, I thought it raises questions, some of the questions we've been hearing here today, and the central question that the Pope throws out, and this last 20 minutes of a two and a half hour film tries to address—How can we believe, given what we know? I might add a few words after we screen this film which are my thoughts about what are the challenges that face the filmmaker whose subject is the spiritual landscape. These 20 minutes will perhaps raise some of those questions as well.

Screening of *John Paul II*

Albacete: I'll be happy to sign autographs on the side...

In view of what Peter has said of the difficulty in facing how the media deal with the faith question itself, not applied religion but religion itself, this is the last 20 minutes of a huge 2 hour thing, 3 hours originally, maybe more...I remember how much it meant to you to have this final 20 minutes on faith. I remember that it wasn't always appreciated.

Whitney: No, it wasn't.

Albacete: When editing had to be done it was suggested it be done more from this part.

Whitney: Yes, absolutely.

Albacete: Tell me about that. How did you do it?

Whitney: Well, it's true that this act is my favorite in the entire film and I had enlightened executives who allowed me to make this film. There's really no criticism of them, but this was the act they went after, and I think it was quite difficult because it was really in response to the questions that the Pope posed—Can man be good without God? How can we believe given what we know in this century? And it really was probably the only source of contentiousness with my executives, was to allow this act to be. And they very much wanted it anchored to the Pope, always to bring him in. And I said that I really felt right now it was time for the audience to reflect on the questions of the last two and a half hours, and go

on their journey themselves. That was not easy, and this act did survive with some editing, but just looking at this 20 minutes was reflecting as a filmmaker just generally about the problems as a filmmaker stylistically and practically to get these films made. They're an enormous expense and I've been making films for about 30 years now, and five of them have been explicitly and directly religious, with overt religious themes, and the rest are more at the sub textual level. And even though I've had really very enlightened executives, it has been a battle each time, and I think, in part, it's that many network executives feel that religion is the third rail; it's controversial; it's upsetting; it's unsettling. And not so much the search for answers, but those people who have found them, and I think questioning is acceptable, but conviction is unsettling.

That's something I certainly experienced in my last film—a four-hour series on the Mormons. They give new meaning to the word “certainty.” That was quite troubling. But the other challenges for a filmmaker, the obvious ones are aesthetic ones—how do you illumine spiritual themes? The themes of belief or unbelief, faith, doubt, anguish, the absence of God, the presence of God—how do you find metaphors that are apt but not too little, but then not too abstract as well? That's a huge challenge and certainly was one that I grappled with in this last 20 minutes.

There are all kinds of other problems that I could see and remember that were true for this film and true for almost every film I've done that's been religious, and one of them has to do with tone. How do you deal with these iconic figures like the Pope, or even Joseph Smith—people who are fiercely loved and fiercely hated as well? What is your posture? Do you move to either one of the extremes which is the hagiography on the right, or reflexive critique on the left, or do you make another mistake which is occupying the middle with a kind of, on the one hand, on the other, and lose some of that edginess of the extremes? For instance, for Joseph Smith, the extremes are, on one hand he's a transparent fraud, and the other he is almost the son of God. But the really interesting part of Joseph Smith, and I could say the same thing, but differently expressed, for the Pope—someone who on the one hand has a bold visionary gleam and really has his own prophetic utterances, and on the other hand is reckless and ruthless. And they're all true and they're all sort of part of that person, and it's a very fine line walking through so you don't fall into that trap of hagiography or you don't fall into the trap of reflexive critiques.

And then, of course, there's the challenge of how you get people to talk about the ineffable. How do you get them to talk with poetry and precision about something so very difficult, and remove that dreadful generic piety that happens so often is discussions about religion? How do you strip away the spiritual jargon so you really can get to an authentic experience?

There are so many other problems that filmmakers have when they deal with these subjects of truth claims and tone and using a lens of psychology in a complex way, but not in a reductive way, not reducing theology to personal biography. The Pope was a constant challenge about that—honoring his roots and honoring how the landscape—physical and personal and biographical—shake his theological ideas.

Anyway, there are many, many challenges that the filmmaker has, in addition to just getting these films made with content and style.

Steinfelds: This is a marvelous 20 minutes, and it's an object lesson in the great gap between the kind of news coverage reporting of religion that I could do at *The New York Times* even, which is an exceptional

opportunity compared to a lot of media outlets, and the sort of work that Helen is able to do. I guess I would maybe remind us that there's a case to be made for all sorts of different media to do different things, and at the same time there was an overlapping concern—I know that when I went to *The Times* in 1988, and I didn't go to journalism school, I never worked for a newspaper, I don't know how this happened exactly. It wasn't my idea, but it happened. Actually what happened is they came and asked me about this when I had just taken over as editor-in-chief for *Commonweal* magazine, and I had to move the offices because the landlord wanted to triple the rent, and I had to raise some funds, and I had never done that before. So it would've been totally irresponsible for me to leave that job. Therefore, I said “no” to *The New York Times*. I think that made me very, very interesting to them, and they kept coming back to me. It wasn't a Machiavellian move on my part, but probably it had that effect.

But in any case, before I went there I thought, what do I want to do? Well, one thing I want to do is write about religion in a way that takes theology seriously, takes worship seriously, suggests that the tensions within religious groups as well as sometimes between them are not simple dichotomies, that on some of these questions there aren't just conservatives and liberals. There may be five different—after you get to five you cannot expect the readers to absorb anymore, but there may be three, four, five different positions that are in conversation or in conflict with one another.

And finally, I thought to myself, I would like to be able to convey the religious lives of “ordinary” people. We're pretty good at taking people who have made choices to be dramatically different out of religious motivation, and they are almost by definition “fringe group” or they're heroic—they're almost by definition willing to talk about what they're about and what they're doing. But the ordinary bank executive, the ordinary shop steward, the ordinary policeman, particularly in America where we have an etiquette of privatization about religion, is often living a very seriously religious life, and acting out of religious feeling and motives and sentiments and beliefs, and not very good or willing to talk about that.

In a decade of working there full time, I think that was the one of my objectives that I failed at the most. It was not entirely my fault because I think it is very hard in our culture, but it certainly makes me appreciate what you are able to do here. I do wonder how many people you interviewed before you decided to go with Robert Stone and Germaine Greer and so on.

Whitney: 850, not on film, but pre-interviewed 850.

Steinfelds: So we're not talking about getting an assignment at 10:30 in the morning and turning in copy at 6. But it also does make me think that we do need these different kinds of explorations, examinations, conversations with faith.

Albacete: You just reminded me, when I went with Helen to present this thing in Pasadena, giving rise to the greatest book of all times, *God at the Ritz*. As a sacrifice, I accepted your invitation to go out to Pasadena, and we presented, and most of the questions, and these were reporters, television critics, etc..., most of the questions then as well as afterwards in the bar, in the pool, were about this section and about the question of belief or unbelief. Is it really possible today to have faith and not lose your integrity? It's amazing. And these were people who otherwise write a superficial review. This is what interested many people.

Q&A

Albacete: Now to kind of try and summarize this very briefly. Again, we have not attended lectures, but have heard the experiences of committed professional people of integrity who are excited by the path of exploring and sharing the results of their exploration of the deepest questions that the human heart faces. As one of the questions says—the disappearance of these questions is a major threat to our future. I was thinking, what does one say, not of the media in general, but of concrete faces of people, many of whom I've been very privileged to call “friends.” What does one say—the attention, not on them, but on us? And I thought, what does the Church say today to this world, this human world? It's a central part of the dominant culture, and yes, it's prone to this or to that, but it's what's there; it's reality, and we're not afraid of anything. We wish, not to condemn or worry, but to affirm, to encourage people to continue, not to give up, to continue asking the questions, even if it's a path of hostility to faith, to continue this hostility, be honest. And I thought, it's very much like what Pope Benedict XVI said to the university world in his famous undelivered speech of La Sapienza in Rome. If you substitute “the media” for “university,” (and in a sense both are related today, the effect they have on society we saw even in the questions) it would sound something like this: I will read to you just the conclusion of that speech:

The danger for the western world – to speak only of this – is that today, precisely because of the greatness of his knowledge and power, man will fail to face up to the question of the truth. This would mean at the same time that reason would ultimately bow to the pressure of interests and the attraction of utility, constrained to recognize this as the ultimate criterion. To put it from the point of view of the structure of the university: there is a danger that philosophy, no longer considering itself capable of its true task, will degenerate into positivism; and that theology, with its message addressed to reason, will be limited to the private sphere of a more or less numerous group. Yet if reason, out of concern for its alleged purity, becomes deaf to the great message that comes to it from Christian faith and wisdom, then it withers like a tree whose roots can no longer reach the waters that give it life. It loses the courage for truth and thus becomes not greater but smaller. . . . What should the Pope do or say at the university? Certainly, he must not seek to impose the faith upon others in an authoritarian manner – as faith can only be given in freedom. Over and above his ministry as Shepherd of the Church, and on the basis of the intrinsic nature of this pastoral ministry, it is the Pope's task to safeguard sensibility to the truth; to invite reason to set out ever anew in search of what is true and good, in search of God.

Thank you.