



THE JOHN PAUL II CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF LUBLIN

RECTOR

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**Letter from the Rector
of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
for Christmas**

**I. „And the Word became flesh [...]. And we saw his glory [...], the
glory as of the Father’s only Son [...] „(John 1:14)**

Dear Friends of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin,

On behalf of the whole community of KUL, I would like to offer my cordial greetings to you. As every year, filled with reflection and wonder at the mystery of the Lord’s birth, we want to experience it together with you. On the day commemorating the martyrdom of Saint Stephen, I would like to dedicate my thoughts to Christians who are persecuted for their faith. Persecution of the Church has not stopped. On the contrary, in some areas of the world it is increasing. We cannot forget about this, and we cannot stay indifferent to the fact that the professed religion becomes the cause of wars, repressions and forced emigration.

II. „[...] whoever endures to the end will be saved” (Mt 10:22)

In the first reading, we have heard that St. Stephen died when he publicly confessed that he saw the heavens opened and Christ standing at the right hand of God, and so equal to the Almighty. It is Christ that opens the heavens to people. He is the open heavens that Stephen saw. But it was Christ himself that was persecuted from the very first days of his earthly life. The mystery of the birth of Jesus Christ cannot be separated from the flight into Egypt and murder of children in Bethlehem. King Herod was determined to find and destroy the one who was to restore the reign of God on earth and to open the heavens. Faced with the failure of his plot in which he tried to entangle the magi from the East, Herod decided to kill everyone who was born at the same time and in the same place as Jesus. Many

innocent people died though only the One was to die. In the passage of *The Gospel of St. Matthew* that we have read today, we heard Christ warning that his disciples would suffer a similar fate. We realize that persecutions of Christ's believers are inscribed in the life of the Church; liturgical texts speak of the procession of martyrs, dressed in white and marching behind the Saviour throughout the ages.

The Church has been and remains the most persecuted community in the world. Our sisters and brothers in faith give their lives for Christ on many continents every day, even today. According to Open Doors, an organisation that examines Christian persecution, there are between 100 and 200 million Christians who suffer repressions in more than 50 countries. We constantly hear about the increasingly difficult situation of Christians in Syria, Iraq and other countries of that region. The Report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe for the years 2000-2010 shows that millions of Christians are subject to various forms of discrimination. This discrimination takes place also in our part of the world, which officially declares respect for religious freedom. It is worrying that both state and international institutions, whose job is to care for the equal treatment of all people, are often blind to the discrimination against Christians. We must not forget about our sisters and brothers who are persecuted for their faith nowadays. However, this should not paralyse us. For Christians, martyrdom, which has been part of the Church history since Christ was born and fled to Egypt, is ultimately victory over the world. Christ's prophecy of persecutions, though difficult to accept, is completed with the words of encouragement and hope for the final victory: „[...] whoever endures to the end will be saved” (Mt 10:22). Spiritual unity and solidarity with Christians persecuted around the world should strengthen our faith and empower us to be more courageous in bearing witness to Christ.

At Christmas, we traditionally leave an additional place setting on the table. This year, let this empty seat at the Christmas Eve's table remind us of all Christians who suffer for their faith. During these holidays, as we remember the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, we cannot forget about all those who leave their home and go into exile in fear of their own lives or of the lives of their loved ones. The Catholic University of Lublin also wants to be and is becoming a place where such people can find refuge. Last year, a young Christian family from the war-torn Syria: Hamida and Asef with their son Adam, then a few months old, joined our University community. KUL has become their new home. This academic year, young people from Ukraine which is experiencing military operations in its eastern part, as well as those from Nigeria shaken with unrest, have taken up studies at our University.

III. “The mission of KUL is to [...] care that categories of thinking, opinion criteria and behaviour standards are imbued by the content of the Gospel” (*Statute of KUL*)

Dear Friends of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin,

With Christmas greetings, I would like to share with you what is happening at our University. For our entire academic community, this year has been primarily the time of thanksgiving for the canonization of John Paul II, KUL’s professor for many years, and presently its patron. Even though it is not due to our contribution, we feel proud of our saint whose testimony and legacy we treat as a gift and commitment.

The internationalization of KUL is one of the main signs and tasks of the present time. I have already mentioned the refugees from Syria studying at our University. Since last year, there has been a significant increase in the number of students from Ukraine, Belarus, Nigeria, China, but also from the United States, France and other countries. In the current academic year, over six hundred foreigners from thirty countries study at KUL.

We are proud to publish the successive volumes of *Opera omnia* by Joseph Ratzinger, honorary doctorate of KUL, and we are finishing work on *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

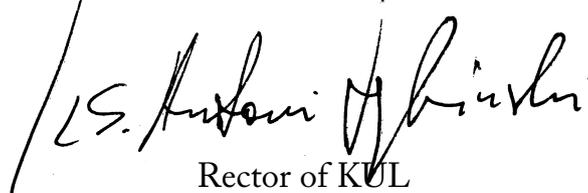
We are overjoyed by many individual successes of employees and students of the University. Our Professor Bishop Artur Miziński has been elected this year to the post of the Secretary General of the Polish Episcopal Conference. Other professors have been appointed by Pope Francis to prestigious bodies in the Holy See, such as the International Theological Commission, the Pontifical Academy for Life, the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Biblical Commission. Often, they are the only Poles working in these institutions. Our professor has been appointed an ad hoc judge to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The students and graduates of KUL have won major awards for their academic achievements.

The Catholic University of Lublin builds its position by referring, in a creative way, to the integral roots of the Latin culture. Upholding a long academic tradition, it meets the expectations of modernity. It creates the conditions for students to get education at the highest level and to prepare them for their future career. And what is equally important to us, it shapes the personality and character, carrying out the mission of advocating the principles of serving God and Fatherland under its motto *Deo et Patriae*. We provide our students with pastoral care and with the environment friendly for building and deepening the faith.

Dear Friends! Remember that KUL is your university. We invite you to the hospitable walls of our University. The door is always open for you. Please, visit our website and our social media profiles. We would like you to know us best. We would like you to have your own opinion about our mission and to share it with us. We encourage young people to get information about our educational offer, which includes not only the humanities, law, theology or philosophy, but also science. Everyone – adults, youth and children – can develop their passions at the KUL Open University. We encourage greatly those who are benevolent and interested in our University to support the activities of the Society of Friends of the Catholic University, founded in 1922 by the then rector of the University Father Jacek Woroniecki. We also fondly remember our graduates and friends of the University. You are KUL ambassadors and we hope that you will continue to be them, and when the need arises, you will also be defenders of your Alma Mater. We remember about all friends of KUL in our prayers every day celebrating Mass at 8:00 am in the academic church.

On behalf of the whole community of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, I wish you blessings from the Divine Child, born in Bethlehem, during this Christmas and throughout the whole year 2015.

The Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Antoni Dębiński



Antoni Dębiński
Rector of KUL

Lublin, Christmas 2014