

TO THE ENGLISH READER

With this issue of “Ethos” the English reader is invited to join a remarkable discourse about the future of the Church and of society in the Third Millennium. Its locus has been the John Paul II Institute, established at the Catholic University of Lublin in 1982 as an inter-disciplinary, scientific centre devoted to the study of the work of John Paul II with particular emphasis on its implications for anthropology and ethics.

This dialogue has become all the more urgent as events of the past several decades reflect the collapse in Western Culture’s understanding and respect for the nature of the human person. This crisis of personal identity, among so many in contemporary society, has led to all-too-familiar crises in relationships between persons – in marriages, families, neighbourhoods, communities, and even nations. These developments accent what Aristotle, and Heraclitus before him, suggested by their use of the term *ethos*: that there is an inherent link between human character and moral action.

As the Holy Father stated at the beginning of his papal ministry in *Redemptor hominis*, “The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the centre of the universe and of history” (No. 1). The event of the Incarnation in history has become the authentic *ethos*, the centre of human existence and the true home for each human person. As John Paul II reminds us, the defining characteristic, the *ethos*, of not only every Christian, but every human being, is the event of Jesus Christ. This *ethos* incorporates all genuine systems of human values and at the same time transcends all value systems in seeking to relate the life of each human person to the fundamental truth of the Incarnation.

The urgency of this task for the Church was brought forth eloquently by John Paul II during his address to the United Nations when he said: “It is one of the great paradoxes of our time that man, who began this period we call

«modernity» with the self-confident assertion of his «coming of age» and «autonomy,» approaches the end of the Twentieth Century fearful of himself, fearful of what he might be capable of, fearful for the future.”

Since 1987, “Ethos” has dedicated itself to the exploration of how an authentic Christian *ethos* articulated in the work of John Paul II may provide a new home for man in the face of this uncertainty. This effort deserves the attention of wider audience. It is one which will undoubtedly be welcomed in many quarters.

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