

Search for truth is search for God

*Before reciting the Angelus on Sunday, 13 December, 1998, the Holy Father continued his reflections on the Encyclical Letter **Fides et ratio**, pointing out that the search for truth, in the last analysis, is a search for God. Here is a translation of the Holy Father's address, which was given in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. Continuing our reflection on the Encyclical *Fides et ratio*, today I would like to stress the existence of truth as the common presupposition of faith and reason. Actually, when man asks questions, he does so in the desire and hope of finding an answer to them.

Sometimes the truth is difficult to seek, as though it were never possessed once and for all, and the experience of error prompts us to be humble and tolerant. At the same time, however, there is no reason for a scepticism that radically questions the very possibility of the human being attaining truth. Where scepticism takes root, sound criteria of judgement and discernment fail, and human existence is prey to the emotions and in danger of lacking foundation.

2. Really, if man experiences difficulty in reaching truth and certitude about many things, he notices however that there are fundamental realities and principles on which there is full and universal certitude.

These truths are the very condition for thought, existence and society. They enable us to communicate, to search, to recognize our mistakes, to live together and to love.

Empirical science itself proves the existence of truth. It appears as a process marked by partial achievements and the gradual overcoming of errors. For this very reason all genuine scientific knowledge is a step towards the fullness of truth. This applies to other areas of knowledge as well. Therefore, in the Encyclical *Fides et ratio* I pointed out a core of philosophical insight within the history of thought as a whole, which "may be judged a kind of spiritual heritage of humanity" (*Fides et ratio*, n. 4). For its part, although the Revelation that comes from on high and has its fullness in Christ leads us to a deeper knowledge of the mystery of God and his saving plan, it is never opposed to the truths already attained by the light of reason; rather it verifies them, purifies them and strengthens them.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, let us entrust to the Blessed Virgin those who are going through periods of confusion and doubt, which make them feel there are no certitudes or hope. At the same time, let us learn humility and boldness from Mary so that we can always advance towards the truth, seeking it and bearing witness to it with all our strength. May she help us understand that the search for truth, in the last analysis, is a search for God.

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