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University of the Holy Cross grants first three honorary doctorates

The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross has given honorary doctorates to Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi (Theology) and to Professors Javier Hervada (Canon Law) and John M. Rist (Philosophy).

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The academic ceremony took place in Rome on November 26, 2002, in

the university's Cardinal Höffner Hall. The participants included rectors of other universities in Rome, members of the diplomatic corps, and colleagues of the three doctors. These are the first three doctorates "honoris causa" that the University of the Holy Cross has granted.

In his opening greeting, Bishop Javier Echevarría, prelate of Opus Dei and Chancellor of the University of the Holy Cross, stated that the university's mission was to give a thorough preparation to "a new generation of men and women dedicated to serving the common good through the development of knowledge." Commenting on the meaning of the event, he referred to the example and teachings of St. Josemaría Escrivá, who had inspired the University of the Holy Cross, and said that for St. Josemaría endeavor and the spiritual life were always deeply united.

"A person who feels a calling to make the university his place of work", said Bishop Echevarría, "is conscious of undertaking a weighty yet exciting responsibility, before both God and men. In order to fulfill it effectively, spiritual effort is no less important than intellectual: if we want to form minds oriented toward truth, we must shape souls thirsty for God."

The first one receiving an honorary degree was Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, archbishop of Milan, who dedicated his "lectio" to the topic, "The Encyclical Veritatis Splendor Today: the relation between truth and freedom." "Our times are especially menaced by the temptation to rob human freedom of its essential and constitutive relation to truth," said the cardinal. He noted also that morality is "participation in the freedom of Jesus Christ, tied to his truth."

"Christian morality is not a simple adherence to abstract ideals or pure obedience to impersonal principles," he said, "but rather an interpersonal relation of singular depth, a vital communion with Christ."

The second person to be honored was Javier Hervada, Professor of Canon Law and Natural Law at the University of Navarre. In his presentation, which he decided to entitle, "Confessions of a Canon Lawyer," he covered his own academic itinerary, originating from two fundamental concepts: that of "legal relation" as the foundation of the canonical system and that of the canonical code understood as a system of legal relations governed by the principle of justice.

John M. Rist, professor emeritus of Classics and Philosophy at the University of Toronto, was the third person receiving an honorary

doctorate. Professor Rist is a member of the Royal Society of Canada and of the Clare Hall of Cambridge. In his "lectio magistralis" he gave a philological and historical analysis of fundamentalism. "A recurrent, if not the most universal, characteristic of fundamentalism is a condition of a kind of voluntary ignorance," he noted. And he clarified that he defines it as voluntary "in the sense that it calls for a choice of life, a praxis, often of a severe and rigid type."

Between the presentations of the doctorates, a chamber chorus directed by Monsignor Pablo Colino performed various musical pieces accompanying the quartet "Gli amici dell'Armonia."

Commenting on the event, Professor Mariano Fazio, the rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, said that "these first three

honorary doctors embody, each in his own environment and with his own personality, a model of excellent research, not only by their indisputable academic merits but also by their generous disposition to serve the academic community. They also present us with a sure point of reference for the intellectual model that we want to form in our university classrooms."

The three new doctors "honoris causa," besides having contributed in distinct ways to the development of the University of the Holy Cross, have lent in the course of their careers, with an authentic "university" spirit, a loyal service to truth. "And this is the spirit that animates the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross: humbly to seek the truth and make it available to others," concluded Professor Fazio.

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