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Press Conference for the presentation of upcoming initiatives of the Vatican Foundation Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI

At 11.00 this morning, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference took place to present the upcoming initiatives of the Vatican Foundation Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI:

- a) The First Edition of the “Ragione Aperta” Prize, in collaboration with the *Universidad Francisco de Vitoria* (Madrid) on 27 September, at the Academy of Sciences in the Vatican.
- b) The Seventh Edition of the “Ratzinger Prize” (with the announcement of the award winners) on 18 November 2017, in the Vatican.
- c) The Seventh international Congress on the theme “Laudato si’. For the care of the common Home”, a necessary conversion to the “Ecology of Man”, in collaboration with the *Universidad Católica de Costa Rica*, from 29 November to 1 December 2017, in San José de Costa Rica.

The speakers at the Press Conference will be:

- His Eminence Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture and member of the Foundation’s Scientific Committee; Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., President of the Managing Board of the Foundation; Prof. Daniel Sada, Magnificent Rector of the *Universidad Francisco de Vitoria*, Madrid; and Dr. Fernando F. Sánchez Campos, Magnificent Rector of the *Universidad Católica de Costa Rica*.

The following is the intervention by Fr. Federico Lombardi:

Intervention Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J.

The aim of this press conference is to present the three main activities of the Vatican Foundation Joseph

Ratzinger – Benedict XVI during this autumn, 2017. I thank Cardinal Ravasi, who is chairing this conference in the dual role of president of the Pontifical Council for Culture and member of the Scientific Committee of the Ratzinger Foundation.

I would like to remind you that the Foundation was instituted in 2010 for the purpose of promoting studies and publications on the work and thought of Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, and more generally, for promoting studies in theology and connected disciplines.

The concrete initiatives indicated by the Statue have three main directions: (1) awards for scholars and worthy works; (2) congress and study meetings and publications; and (3) scholarships for doctoral candidates.

Throughout this last year, I recall in particular that the Congress on the theme of eschatology in collaboration with the University of the Holy Cross (November 2016) and the activities on the occasion of the 90th birthday of the Pope emeritus (April 2017), with the publication and presentation of a volume in his honour, composed with the contribution of the winners of various editions of the Ratzinger Prize and many other publications of articles, book prefaces, and interviews.

Now we have ahead of us an autumn rich in initiatives that we will present today, along with some protagonists of the two new initiatives carried out in collaboration, namely the Magnificent Rectors of the University Francisco de Vitoria (Madrid), Professor Daniel Sada, and of the Catholic University of Costa Rica, Dr. Fernando Sánchez Campos.

The first is a real novelty, arising from the collaboration with the Spanish University Francisco de Vitoria, along with which the Foundation had already organised one of its important annual Congresses in Madrid 2015 on the theme “Prayer, force that transforms the world”, on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Saint Teresa of Avila.

It is a new prize, entitled “Ragione aperta”, inspired by an idea central to Ratzinger’s thought. He insisted on the need for a broad and open vision of reason and its exercise in the search for truth, and in the response to fundamental questions on humanity and its destiny. This idea is fundamental for dialogue between the Church and modern culture, and between sciences and philosophy and theology, and therefore also a fundamental idea for the way of thinking of the university and its function. The initiative for this new Prize came indeed from the University Francisco de Vitoria and our Foundation joined in gladly, participating in its launch a year ago, taking part in the jury to decide the winning works, and now organising the prize-giving ceremony here in Rome, which will take place tomorrow afternoon at the Academy of Sciences.

The works which came to the attention of the international Jury by April 2017 – in English and Spanish – numbered 367, from 170 universities in over 30 different countries. They cover many and varied subjects: legal, economic and social sciences, sciences of communication; physical, biological, environmental, biomedical and health sciences; engineering and architecture; humanistic sciences, philosophy and theology. Four winning works were chosen by the Jury, convened in Madrid on 12 and 13 July 2017 – two in the “Research” section and two in “Teaching” – and two honourable mentions were assigned.

The winners for research are: Darcia Narvaez, of the University of Notre Dame (United States of America), with a work on “Neurobiology and the development of human morality”, and Claudia Vanney and Juan Franck, of the Universidad Austral of Buenos Aires, with a collective work on “Determinism or indeterminism? Great questions from the science of philosophy”. The winners for teaching are: Michael Schuck, Nancy Tuchman and Michael Garanzini of the Loyola University of Chicago, for an online text for ecological formation entitled “Healing Earth”; and Sarolta Laura Baritz, a Dominican sister from Budapest, for a teaching programme on the “Christian social principles for the economy”, implemented at the Sapientia College and the Corvinus University. Special mention was given to the Anglican Rev. Christopher Cook of the University of Durham, for the Master in Spirituality, Theology and Health, and the two young professors of communication at the University Francisco de Vitoria, Artura Encinas Cantalapiedra and Alberto Oliván Tentorio, for the course “Teaching the narrative of videogames, or how we narrate our lives through videogames”.

The Magnificent Rector of the University Francisco de Vitoria, Professor Daniel Sada, will give a slightly more comprehensive presentation.

However, I would like to make two important observations: 1) The unexpected success of the proposal: more than 300 works were presented from over 30 different countries. 2) The possibility that has arisen of developing a connection and a network between the very many researchers who have shown interest in the idea proposed by the Prize, and therefore the plan to continue, not only with further editions of the Prize, but also with the development of platforms for dialogue between participants, on which the University Francisco de Vitoria is also working, and in which the Foundation will certainly continue to collaborate.

So, you are invited tomorrow afternoon to the Academy of Sciences, where you will be able to meet personally the winners, and also to understand more deeply the spirit and meaning of this new Prize.

The second important initiative is the already well-known Ratzinger Prize, which has reached its seventh edition. The prizewinners are proposed to Pope Francis by the Scientific Committee, made up of five members: Cardinals Amato, Koch and Ravasi; H.E. Msgr. Ladaria and this year the bishop of Regensburg, Msgr. Voderholzer – thus ensuring the connection with the Benedict XVI Institute in Regensburg.

This year there are three prizewinners, as in 2011, while in the following years there were two:

Theodor Dieter (born in 1951): German Lutheran theologian, Professor (since 1994) and director (since 1997) at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. Heavily involved in ecumenical dialogue, he played a role of great importance in the drafting and approval of the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” of 31 October 1999. In 2012 he was the Relator in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue during the course at Castelgandolfo of the Ratzinger-Schülerkreis, in the presence of Benedict XVI.

Karl-Heinz Menke (born in 1950). German Catholic theologian and priest. Professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Preparatory Theology at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Bonn, member of the Commissions of the German Episcopal Conference, he is the author of numerous theological publications. He has a profound knowledge of the thought of Joseph Ratzinger, to whom he has dedicated various studies. In September 2014 he was appointed by Pope Francis as a member for five years of the International Theological Commission.

Arvo Pärt (born in 1935 in Paide, Estonia), Orthodox Christian, musical composer, devoted mainly to religious music, for which he is recognised at international level. Holder of a doctorate *honoris causa* from the Pontifical Institute of Religious Music, he participated in the exhibition on “The Splendour of truth, beauty of charity”, organised for the sixtieth anniversary of the ordination of Benedict XVI, performing the *Pater Noster* in the presence of the Pontiff. He was appointed as a member of the Pontifical Council for Culture by Benedict XVI in 2011.

I note two characteristics of this year’s selection. Demonstrating the ecumenical openness of the horizons of the Prize, we have a Catholic (Professor Menke), a Lutheran (Professor Dieter, in the anniversary year of the Reformation), and an Orthodox (Maestro Arvo Pärt). We then also have a broadening of the scope of the activities of the prizewinners, also including the arts, in the case of music of profoundly religious inspiration. Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI’s appreciation of the art of music and the highly religious inspiration of Pärt’s musical art would appear to justify the attribution of the Prize also outside the strictly theological sphere.

Cardinal Ravasi will offer a more in-depth presentation.

The Prize will be awarded on 18 November, the day after the conclusion of a large Congress at the Gregorian University on Saint Bonaventure, in which naturally the famous dissertation by the young Professor Ratzinger on Saint Bonaventure, now published in the Opera Omnia, will be remembered. We hope that, like last year, the Prizes will be presented by Pope Francis himself.

The third important initiative is the Seventh International Study Congress, which this year is organised with the Catholic University of Costa Rica in San José in Costa Rica, some time around the end of November and the beginning of December. It is dedicated to the very current theme from the encyclical *Laudato si'*, keeping in mind the continuity of the teaching of Pope Francis with that of Benedict XVI, also in this specific field. The theme is of great interest in the Latin American area and will be treated not only from a theoretical point of view, but also with the contribution of experts in the field and with the aim of developing an extensive project of indicators for measuring the environmental situation and its evolution, and therefore also active collaboration among universities – and in particular Catholic universities – in this area. Viewing the programme and the speakers, one is aware of the very high level of this Congress from a scientific and ecclesial point of view; it will be described by the originator of the initiative, the Magnificent Rector Dr. Fernando Sánchez Campos, former ambassador of Costa Rica to the Holy See.

As the Rector shows, the event of the Congress inspires great interest in Costa Rica, where the theme of the environment is keenly felt: the Congress has been declared an event of national relevance.

I wish to point out that the presence of three Cardinals is expected: Ouellet, Hummes and Versaldi, and of the authorities of the Federation of Catholic Universities of the region, and international. I believe it may be said that this Congress gives a new and very meaningful impetus to the collaboration between the Catholic universities of the region. In addition, the proposal of an integrated indicator for measuring the ecological situation on the basis of criteria indicated in the Encyclical and the constitution of an Observatory following its evolution using such an index are a new working hypothesis, with which the Congress hopes to give an original contribution in response to the appeal for theoretical and practical mobilisation, launched by Pope Francis with the publication of his Encyclical.
