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IULIAN RUSU
A PILLAR OF AUTHENTICITY IN THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE. GRATITUDE AND REMEMBRANCE

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There are people whose presence is measured not in years, but in the depth of the mark they leave on the consciousness of those who knew them and in the advancement of the fields they served. Iulian Rusu was, without a doubt, such a person. A faculty member in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Environmental Protection of the "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University in Iași, Iulian Rusu embodied, through his very professional biography, the dialogue he promoted with such passion: a chemical engineer by training, grounded in the rigor of the exact sciences, who understood that the laboratory and the altar are not competing spaces, but complementary windows open to the mystery of existence. His stature cannot be confined to local boundaries, however honorable that setting may be; rather, it resonates globally, where the dialogue between theology and science seeks, with ever-greater urgency, points of convergence and mutual enrichment.

When we speak of Iulian Rusu, we speak first and foremost of a vision. A vision that, in 2005—in a Romanian academic landscape where the interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and science was barely beginning to take shape—took concrete form through the founding of the European Journal of Science and Theology. It was not merely an editorial endeavor, but a truly foundational act. The journal, now indexed at the highest level of scientific quality in international databases, embodies a profound conviction: that science and theology are not opposing realms, but complementary dimensions of the human search for meaning and truth.

Iulian Rusu's merit lies precisely in this rare ability to have been a true pioneer in building a synthesis, a complementarity. He did not wait for the theology–science dialogue to become an academic trend before embracing it; rather, he anticipated it, built it into his own methodological framework, and offered it to the international scientific community as a dynamic platform for interdisciplinary encounter and exploration. His intellectual courage, combined with impeccable academic rigor and a disarming human warmth, transformed him into a consummate scholar whose excellence requires no excessive praise, but only a careful look at what he left behind.

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I met Iulian during my master's studies, from 2007 to 2009, at the "Dumitru Stăniloae" Faculty of Orthodox Theology at "Al. I. Cuza" University in Iași. As valedictorian, his intellectual brilliance never overshadowed the human warmth with which he reached out to those around him. Building on the foundation of our friendship, it was he who, with a generosity possessed only by truly great minds, introduced me to the academic world at the beginning of my university career as a lecturer at the Faculty of Theology of "Ovidius" University in Constanța. He opened up opportunities for me that I might not even have dared to imagine: he invited me to participate in prestigious European symposia—from Viterbo to Trnava, from Iași to Žilina—giving me the chance to present scholarly papers alongside established researchers and to experience firsthand what the international academic community is all about.

I, in turn, had the honor of welcoming him as an invited speaker at the Faculty of Theology in Constanța, where his lectures—Theology and Science in Dialogue (2016) and The Real and the Imaginary in Science and Theology (2019)—both fascinated and challenged the audience of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members. Each time, he was the same Iulian: rigorous and passionate, precise and inspired, grounded in scientific data and open to the theological mystery of the certainty of faith, without ever pushing the boundaries of a synthesis that is impossible to achieve. In his lectures, science and theology did not contradict one another but illuminated each other, within a horizon of complementarity that only a truly illustrious mind can open up.

Today, now that Iulian is no longer with us, all that he built remains. The journal he founded continues its mission through the care of his family, who have assumed with dignity the responsibility of carrying on this endeavor. This is, perhaps, the most beautiful tribute that can be paid to him: that his vision remain alive, that the horizon of synthesis, complementarity, and dialogue he opened up may expand into new paradigms, integrating new generations of researchers who, perhaps without realizing it, are his spiritual heirs.

Iulian Rusu remains, for me and for all who knew him, a beacon of authenticity. In an academic world often tempted by superficiality, by spectacle without substance, or by specializations that ignore one another, he demonstrated that there is another way: with depth, intellectual honesty, and a humanity that is not diluted but amplified through engagement with the great existential questions. We have not forgotten him, and we will not forget him. And perhaps, ultimately, the most fitting form of gratitude is precisely this: to carry on the dialogue he began, with the same passion, the same rigor, and the same conviction that science and theology, together, can say something essential about the world and about humanity.

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