

Excellencies, Colleagues, and guests,

As we know, this year is a year of commemorating great literary figures: universities and various institutions all over the world are celebrating the life and work of Shakespeare and Cervantes, 400 years after their deaths. Perhaps not as well known, but certainly just as important is the life and work of St. Thomas More, who, as we have already heard, is truly a ‘man for all seasons’, and his masterpiece work, *Utopia*, is still a book for all seasons, even 500 years after its publication in 1516. This is why in the year 2000, the Catholic Church took the well meditated decision of proclaiming Saint Thomas More as the Patron Saint of politicians and statesmen. Pope John Paul II stated then that “The life and martyrdom of Saint Thomas More have been the source of a message which spans the centuries and which speaks to people everywhere of the inalienable dignity of the human conscience. Precisely because of the witness which he bore, even at the price of his life, to the primacy of truth over power, Saint Thomas More is venerated as an imperishable example of moral integrity”. And so we see that the life of Saint Thomas More clearly illustrates a fundamental truth of political ethics—the very ethics that the world is in such dire need of today. NDU takes great satisfaction in organizing this conference. Our aim is to give hope and encouragement to our young people here in Lebanon, who all too often either give up in near despair when it comes to Lebanese politics, or are manipulated by their elders who really should know better. We are honored to have with

us not one, but two Ambassadors today, representing the Holy See and the United Kingdom. Their presence here underscores just how important Thomas More really is. I want to thank them for coming and to thank the Faculty of Law and Political Science and the Benedict XVI Endowed Chair of Religious, Cultural, and Philosophical Studies for working together to organize this event. I also want to thank our speakers at this Conference, in particular our international guests.

I wish you all fruitful conference.