I’d like to open this plenary session with a brief thought about Giovanni Anania.

At the very moment that I am talking, exactly two months have passed since it happened and it is still difficult to accept. We have prematurely lost an extraordinary colleague and an irreplaceable friend. We are still lost and deeply sad, with a pain that will not go away.

Giovanni was my best friend and the professor from whom I learnt most. He leaves many of us with marvellous memories of a mentor, colleague and friend. He leaves the whole academic community with a great wealth of work, original results and plenty of food for thought. He also leaves the precious contributions he made during his professional life, as a member of prestigious national and international scientific associations and as a professional who was out of the ordinary.

He became a part of the teaching body at the University of Calabria at just 27 years of age and rapidly completed his academic career. Last year he was made the President of the European Association of Agrarian Economists.

Giovanni was a student in the Faculty of Economic And Social Sciences, here at the University of Calabria, and he then decided to stay in Calabria even though he had received numerous proposals of work in other more prestigious universities. When he was a student, the residential, limited intake “Arcavacata
“Campus” was an “unusual university” where students and professors lived in close contact, not just during lessons and didactic activity, but for much of their daily lives. A university that had been planned deliberately to become a community of inclusive, democratic people; a place to build active citizenship; an opportunity for cultural progress and higher education, particularly for young people from less wealthy Calabrian families.

Giovanni lost both of his parents in his early years at the university and Unical became his community. Besides attending lessons assiduously and studying intensely, he was a well-known active personality in student social life on campus and took part in the protest movements that sought to increase students’ rights and improve their conditions. It was in this context of young professors and “active” students that Giovanni met Margherita, a teacher of Geometry, his beloved wife.

On the day of his graduation, he was told that he had won a place and a grant at the Centro per le Ricerche e Sviluppo del Mezzogiorno (Research and Development Centre for Southern Italy) in Portici, the school founded by Manlio Rossi Doria. After he went to the University of Essex and then to Davis University in California. Although his more advanced education occurred at foreign universities, on the first page of his Phd thesis “Arriverderci in Italia” (See you in Italy) was written in italics, in Italian.

Giovanni was greatly attached to Italy, and particularly to his native region, Calabria. He considered Calabria to be an area of the world like many others, with its advantages and disadvantages. He identified himself with a Calabria which was open to interaction and contamination, a small universe that was anything but immobile, in progress like elsewhere. Giovanni was above all
convinced that one could “do things” in Calabria, change the “state of things” and live one’s life with dignity.

In the very year in which he presented his Phd., I followed his course (Giovanni was already an associate professor in Italy) and I appreciated for the first time his extraordinary qualities as a teacher. Giovanni dedicated a great deal of time to preparing his courses in detail, correcting long pieces of homework and students’ individual work. His lessons were based on rigorous theoretical models, but applied to concrete matters of economic politics. He often organised study visits to local businesses for his classes and seminar cycles on the work of the students who frequented the course. Many students profited from the individual work they had been involved in during Giovanni’s courses at the beginning of their own careers. However, what I always found truly extraordinary was his willingness to listen and solve, where possible, students’ problems, providing them with advice and support even when their problems had little to do with his course! I later realised that this extraordinary quality of Giovanni’s was also given to many colleagues at work: Giovanni had an uncommon capacity to listen to and understand people and to help them make decisions, but without ever imposing his own point of view (a quality that he had, in turn, appreciated in his professor at Davis, Alex McCalla, to whom Giovanni was very close and grateful).

Giovanni was the director of the Department of Economics and Statistics of the University of Calabria (1999 – 2001) and the “Consiglio di Corso di Laurea” (Council of the Degree Course) in Economics (2003-2005; 2007-2009; 2011-2013) and a member of the University Administrative Council (1991 – 1993). He was a member of the board of professors for a number of doctorates in Italy: that for Applied Economics (University of Calabria); Agrarian Economics and
Giovanni was one of world’s most important experts on European agricultural policy and international trade. I have counted 163 publications, 19 of which are monographs, 60 articles in scientific reviews and 53 chapters of books, and even more is still being printed. Among his research interests which were nearest to the areas of Regional Science, the contributions made to the study of territorial systems using techniques of multivariate analysis have been greatly cited.


As a colleague, my gratitude to Giovanni was enormous. He was always well prepared, never late, and always full of respect for other people’s work; he was a pleasure to work with. His “research questions” were always aimed at questions of clear social importance. He never got trapped in the excitement of using sophisticated models unless they were obviously the most appropriate instrument of dealing with the research topic in question.

Giovanni was a student and, then, a rigorous, painstaking, accurate researcher. To the end he practiced labor limae, the patient work of multiple revisions of his
own contributions and those of his colleagues. Giovanni was pages full to the edges with corrections, suggestions and integrations.

Giovanni was a very determined person; he had strong convictions regarding that which, in his opinion, was the right way to do things and, as always happens with people who have a strong sense of what is right and wrong, discussions with Giovanni in meetings, in the Department or in the Faculty, could sometimes be very tense. However, it was precisely this great intellectual integrity, which sometimes cost him very much in his professional life, that constituted his most precious lesson to those who worked and lived with him. Giovanni could not tolerate injustice, either towards himself or towards others, and he fought for legality and justice with courage and determination.

Giovanni was very serious and extremely responsible when matters were important; but when the serious matters had been dealt with, he became warm and entertaining. He “melted” and was jovial, smiling, sunny and generous. Giovanni loved to sing.

Giovanni was an avid and curious traveller. He appreciated travel in itself, beyond the simple act of arrival. He travelled a lot because of his scientific and professional commitments, but also simply for pleasure. He loved the sea immensely, its colours, the fish and diving. He explored some beautiful waters and took photos which left our children open-mouthed. Giovanni was an agenda which was full for at least the next eighteen months.

Giovanni had a genuine deep interest in his friends. He always asked discretely about their lives and their families. Although he had chosen not to have children of his own, Giovanni connected with kids incredibly easily. He “besieged” them
with questions about school, their games and favourite sports. He would amaze them with a fantastic story about some corner of the world he had been to.

Giovanni was a little golden box full of delicious chocolates returning from Brussels.

Giovanni’s death has left a great void. We are honoured to have been able to hang around with him for so long in such an affectionate and familiar way, albeit for a lot less than we would have liked.

We will remember Giovanni with gratitude and admiration for his contributions to our professional and academic lives and with great esteem for the person he was.

Giovanni is a marvellous memory of a friend and scholar.