



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF YOUNG ASTRONOMY SCHOLARS

Monday, 30 June 1986

Dear Friends,

1. I am pleased to greet the participants in the Vatican Observatory Summer School in Observational Astronomy and Astrophysics which is meeting at Castel Gandolfo. You have come from many different lands and cultures. You come as students, as learners, as future scholars. You come, at the invitation of the Vatican Observatory, in order to study some of the aspects of modern astrophysics and observational cosmology.

This is the first time, through the initiative of the Vatican Observatory, that the Holy See has invited young students to a school at which they will follow lectures given by an eminent faculty on some of the most important topics of modern astrophysics. I am very happy to sponsor this school and thus to follow in the footsteps of my predecessor Leo XIII, the founder of the Vatican Observatory, who wished all to know that, far from being opposed to authentic scientific research, the Church desires to support and further such endeavours.

2. The historical roots of these works of the Church can be traced to the Cathedral Schools which arose at the dawn of the post-Roman era in Europe. In those schools, closely linked to the earliest Christian places of worship, young scholars like yourselves found the leisure, security and inspiration needed for successful study. Through their dedication to the liberal arts, which included astronomy, they came to love and respect things of the mind and spirit, and their intellectual pursuits gave rise to the first great universities such as Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Padua and Salamanca.

3. In your course in Observational Astronomy and Astrophysics you are being given an introduction to scientific inquiry into the wonders of God's universe, and you do this at an Observatory which has a long and rich history of observational research, extending from the work of Fathers Clavius, Secchi, Denza, Lais and Hagen up to the present day. It is fitting, that which

such a long tradition of research, the Vatican Observatory should offer you this opportunity.

I hope that some of you will indeed be in a position to develop the calling to be research scientists and that you will one day join the ranks of those who seek to examine, test, classify and ultimately explain to others the interaction between matter and energy over vast distances and years. You are truly fortunate, and I know that you are grateful, as I am, to those who are providing you with such marvellous opportunities. We should particularly thank Father McCarthy, the Dean of the School, and the guest faculty who have volunteered their services for this worthy undertaking.

4. I only ask that you would share the good things which you receive. Each day of your school, try to find time to reflect on the fact that peace is essential for true progress in your science. Be men and women of peace, and let the peace in your minds and hearts become the peace reflected in your lives and daily work. I pray that this will be among the lessons that you will take away from this school.

Deum Creatorem, venite, adoremus. Come let us adore God the Creator. May he bless you all.

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