



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMIES**

*Tuesday, 29 October 2002*

*Your Eminence,  
Your Excellencies,  
Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I am very happy to greet all of you who take part in the *Seventh Public Session of the Pontifical Academies*, each one in its own field of research and initiative generously committed to the effective promotion of a new Christian humanism for the third millennium.

My gratitude to Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the Coordinating Committee of the Pontifical Academies, and my thanks for his kind words on your behalf. With him, I greet the cardinals, ambassadors, bishops and priests and all who are present.

2. This assembly of the Pontifical Academies is dedicated to Mariological reflection and was organized by the International Pontifical Marian Academy and the Pontifical Academy of (Mary) Immaculate. I greet the two Presidents, the well prepared presenters and the academicians who are here.

With the theme of this meeting: *Mary, the "radiant dawn and sure guide" of the new evangelization*, you have wished to take up the words that I used to conclude my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, entrusting the destinies of the new millennium and the way of the Church to Mary, Mother of God and Mother of all believers. Once again I wanted to point her out as the "Star of the New Evangelization" so that, in the heart and mind of every disciple of the Lord, she may truly be the star that illumines and guides him/her on the journey towards Christ.

"Set out anew from Christ", is the call I addressed to the whole Church at the end of the Great

Jubilee of the Year 2000. Set out anew from Christ, learning to contemplate and love his face, on which shines the glory of the Father.

3. Who, better than Mary, can help us and encourage us in this endeavour? Who, better than Mary, can teach us to contemplate and love that face that she contemplated with immense love and total dedication throughout his life, from his birth until the hour of the Cross, and then at the dawn of the Resurrection? The Gospel of St Luke tells us twice that Mary "kept all these things in her heart" (Lk 2,19.51). Mary's heart is a precious tabernacle in which she keeps safe for us too the riches of Christ.

If it is true, as the Second Vatican Council says in the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, that only in the mystery of Christ is the mystery of man truly made clear (cf. n. 22), and the mystery of Mary that "exceptional daughter of the human race" (cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 4). It is also true that on the face of Christ and in the features of his humanity are reflected the features of his mother, her educational style, her way of being and feeling. For this reason, if we want to contemplate in depth the face of Christ, we must have recourse to Mary who, in fully accepting God's plan, in a most singular way, "shaped" her Son and accompanied him at each stage of his growth.

So we can accept the invitation that St Bernard addresses to the supreme poet, Dante Alighiere: "Look now at the face which bears the closest resemblance to Christ, for its brightness alone can dispose you to see Christ" (*Par.* XXXII, 85-87). Mary is truly the bright dawn of the new evangelization and the sure guide on the path of the Church in the new millennium.

4. What is important is the theological, cultural and spiritual commitment of everyone, starting with you, dear academicians of the Pontifical International Marian Academy and the Pontifical Academy of (Mary) Immaculate, who reflect on the person of the Virgin Mary to know her in a much deeper way. This also supposes an interdisciplinary research that develops Mariological reflection, investigating new sources in addition to the traditional ones, to draw from them further starting points for theological research. For example, I can think of the saints and their personal experience, of Christian art, which has always found in Mary a preferred subject, and of popular piety that in affirming the "affective" dimension, has left us an important witness to Mary's mission in the life of the Church.

A suitable opportunity to intensify this commitment will be the 150th anniversary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The two Pontifical Marian Academies, each in its own sphere of activity and with its own competence, are called to make their contribution so that the observance may be an opportunity to renew the theological, cultural and spiritual endeavour to communicate to the men and women of our time the meaning and the genuine message of this truth of faith.

5. Dear brothers and sisters, you all know that I have established the Pontifical Academies' Prize to encourage the work of young scholars and of institutions that dedicate their activity to the advancement of Christian humanism. For this reason, accepting the proposal of the Coordinating Committee of the Pontifical Academies, on this solemn occasion I am pleased to award this Prize to Rosa Cali for her doctoral thesis entitled: *The Anti-Mariological Texts in the Exegesis of the Fathers from Nicea to Chalcedon*. As a sign of appreciation and encouragement I also wish to present medals of the Pontificate to Fr Stanislaw Bogusz Matula and to Sr Philomena D'Souza for their outstanding studies.

Finally, in bringing this solemn Session to a close, I would like to express to all the academicians my deep appreciation of their activity and my hope of a renewed and generous commitment in the theological, spiritual and pastoral fields *tertio millennio ineunte (as the third millennium begins)*.

With these sentiments, I entrust each one of you to the motherly protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and I cordially impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing.