



Address to the Plenary Session and to the Study Week on the Subject 'The Role of Non-Specific Immunity in the Prevention and Treatment of Cancer'



The Pope declares that true scientists – all those who 'work in a worthy way' – further scientific knowledge 'according to the Creator's invitation', and 'under the responsibility of conscience' prepare 'technical progress in harmony with man's vocation and complete good'. Thus, for example, the attempts to find cures for cancer, 'a terrible affliction', constitute a 'high service to humanity'.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are very happy to receive your visit. And the reason is a double one: the presence of the Council of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and that of eminent cancerologists.

We are always ready, in fact, to encourage the activity of our Academy, stimulated zealously by its President and its Council. The Holy See is anxious to honour in this way, in the persons of the members of this Pontifical Institution, and through them, all those who in a worthy way, shed lustre on science. For, by examining objectively the immense field of physical and biological realities, they contribute to ensuring the real progress of scientific knowledge, according to the Creator's invitation, and to preparing technical progress in harmony with man's vocation and complete good, and therefore under the responsibility of conscience.

But this morning our interest takes on a concrete form and grows, since with the specialists that we are happy to greet, you have just dedicated a week of studies to what is, rightly, the object of deep concern on the part of our contemporaries: the prevention and treatment of cancer.

You have concentrated your attention on non-specific immunity in this field. We ourselves attribute great importance to this work, for we share the anxiety of our brothers and Christ's ardent desire to see the sick relieved or cured of their infirmities. And it is a question of a terrible affliction, which strikes, still too often irremediably and in the midst of cruel sufferings, a large number of people, even at a comparatively young age, from every country. The disease is all the more powerful in that its mechanisms seem closely linked with the normal processes of cellular reproduction, in which they create grave anarchy.

In addition to surgical operations and radiological treatments which have already made great progress, at the risk, however, of acting on normal cells as well as on cells of cancerous tumours, you have wished to study the exploration of a new way, by utilising immunological and immunochemical means, to activate the defences of the organism or stop the proliferation of neoplastic cells. We thank you heartily for informing us of the results of your work. We hope that it will help to prepare the medical progress to which so many people aspire, physicians, patients and the relatives of patients. We congratulate you on this high service to humanity and we willingly implore on you and on the members of your families the blessings of God, the source of life and Saviour.