



Mankind and Energy: Needs, Resources, Hopes



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Foreword – One of the most distressing problems which humanity must face before the end of this century is the energy problem. As we all know, our civilization is based on expendable energy. Every effort must now be made to find not only more effective, more economical methods to use new sources of energy, but also how to use renewable sources in a way that is effective and economic as well. We must bear in mind that the principal source of energy on our planet is furnished by the sun and that we are still far from being able to use it as we would like. His Holiness Pope John Paul II, addressing the members of the Study Week on Humanity and Energy, very clearly pointed out the most important aspects of the problem. This is not limited to questions of a scientific or economic order; it goes beyond these limits and is complicated by the news arising from the very context of the culture of each country. The Study Week, whose proceedings are published in this volume, attempted to approach the problem holistically. Evidently, despite the considerable efforts of the participants, the extent of their knowledge and experience, and their desire to find the perhaps magic formula which could solve the binomial mankind-energy, the problem has not been completely solved. This is because in one part of this field – I would even say in its major part – we still lack not only the indispensable scientific knowledge but also the information of a sociological and economic order, which varies so greatly that it makes precise forecasting impossible. Nevertheless, I believe that the Study Week, which was organized by the Pontifical Academician Professor Blanc-Lapierre, was a great success, thanks to the freedom of expression which characterizes the work of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, to the very representative choice of the participants, and to the desire of all those present to make a positive contribution to the understanding and the solution of this problem. The book which we here present is undoubtedly a contribution to this important question and can serve as a basis for further discussion in the study of the different projects. It is not my intention here to emphasize the important data contained in the conclusions reached, but I believe that they are substantially correct and indispensable to progress regarding this problem which preoccupies both the industrialized world and the developing countries. I wish to thank the Pontifical Academician Prof. Blanc-Lapierre – assisted by Prof. Jean Bussac – for his constant dedication and for the very difficult work of organizing a Study Week. For a whole year, with great zeal he has placed all his intelligence at the service of this undertaking. Surely, Prof. Blanc-Lapierre's preeminence in the scientific and technological world has helped him, but what I have especially admired during these months in which he has worked for the success of his mission is the constant devotion and interest which have permitted him to accomplish his task brilliantly. The pages of this text bear witness to this. Furthermore I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Rev. Father Enrico di Rovasenda, Director of the Chancellery of the Academy and to Mrs. Michelle Porcelli-Studer, Secretary of the Chancellery, as well as to Mr. Silvio Devoto for the flawless organisation of the meeting and their constant zeal and help during its development. Finally I also want to thank Mrs. Gilda Massa for her help in preparing the transcriptions of the discussions and the final revision of the proceedings.

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