



Commemoration of Guglielmo Marconi for the Centenary of his Birth



Upon the initiative of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, a ceremony to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Guglielmo Marconi was held in the Synod Hall on 13 November 1974, in the presence of the Holy Father Paul VI.

After a greeting to the Pope by the President of the Academy, Prof. Carlos Chagas, Academician Prof. Giovanni Battista Marini Bettòlo delivered the official speech, in which he recalled the work of the great scientist, pointing out that his scientific research was conceived as a function of improving the human condition.

“In addition to his commitment to his own studies – said Prof. Marini Bettòlo – Marconi was asked to oversee scientific research in Italy, as President of the National Research Council, thanks to the worldwide recognition his discovery had received. From his down-to-earth view, he considered progress and well-being as the goals of scientific research”.

In 1932 Marconi prophetically stated that “Science provides endless resources to help human beings in their day-to-day life, and one day in the not-too-distant future human beings may be able to govern new forces of nature still unknown and unsuspected to them ... Above all, science and scientific research must be inspired by the concept that progress must create employment, not remove it or concentrate it in a few, because work is the purpose of life, enjoyment and pride”.

“Scientific research must lead to a better use of raw materials, to the perfecting of production methods, to an increase and improvement of products and to a reduction in their cost”.

At the service of humanity

This vision of technological and social improvement, in the context of the development of scientific

research, perfectly coincides with Marconi's mentality and his work at the service of humanity. He also believed that science and scientific research must be factors of progress and civilization and developed by industry.

"Without the help of pure science and scientific research – he said – civilization, which is the consequence of an ongoing effort for our spiritual and material improvement, would not have reached its high level. At the same time we must recognize that without the means that industry in many countries has been able to place at the disposal of science and research, many of the important discoveries and inventions – and especially the more recent ones – would perhaps have been delayed for several generations".

Marconi believed that scientific research was the most powerful tool for improving the human condition, at a difficult time for people during the great economic depression of the 1930s. Professor Marini-Bettòlo spoke highly of Guglielmo Marconi and recalled his last works and writings.

Science for the good of man

"Like Galileo and Volta, Marconi affirmed the value of experimentation in modern science, as a means of broadening the horizon of theory and directing it to the benefit of humanity, facilitating dialogue between individuals and peoples and bridging gaps. He leaves us with the admonishment – which is as timely as ever for scientists today – that science must be for the good of humankind".

Pope Paul VI, expressing his satisfaction with the initiative of the Academy, thanked Prof. Marini Bettòlo and noted that the work of Guglielmo Marconi, a great scientist and believer, demonstrated the great possibilities of human thought and actions, when these are directed to the good of humanity. They also attest to the glory of God, because the discovery and use of nature's energies underscore the power of the Creator.

Before leaving the Synod Hall, the Holy Father met a few of the personalities present, including the scientist's widow, Marchioness Maria Cristina Marconi Bezzi Scala, with her daughters, Marchioness Degna Paresce Marconi and Princess Elettra Giovannelli Marconi, and her grandson.

On the stage was a large photograph of Pope Pius XI's meeting with Guglielmo Marconi in the headquarters of Vatican Radio, created by Marconi himself in 1933 to connect the Apostolic Palace with the Pope's residence in Castel Gandolfo. It was, as Marconi said, "the first public radio service to use microwaves".