



The Importance of the Academy and the Vatican Observatory

Address to Inaugurate the Academic Year of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences 'New Lynxes'

Pius XI praises the work of the Academy and the Vatican Observatory, and lauds the achievements of General Nobile.

His Holiness said that he would most willingly give in a little while his Apostolic Blessing that the Reverend Father Gianfranceschi, the so worthy President of the Academy, had asked for, and would bestow it on the very noble work of the Academicians, both past and future, that is to say in particular on what they proposed for the now inaugurated new academic year.

But he wanted first – and he could not but want – to say a few words first of all out of that duty which is always pressing as soon as it presents itself, to express gratitude for the action of devoted sons, for the thought of referring to, of remembering through the work of the new academic year (in the splendours, therefore, of the sciences which were so well cultivated), the thought and the memory of his priestly Jubilee, a thought and a memory which were really those of so many inestimable and invaluable benefits that Divine witness and mercy had bestowed upon him.

To these words of thanks he had to add, and he did this with real paternal joy, most sincere words of congratulations on the scientific merits that during the last academic year as well they had so nobly accumulated in the field of knowledge. The Holy Father himself had been able to gain an idea with a glance, albeit rapidly engaged in, a really furtive glance amidst all the other concerns that the Ancients classically called *negotia* (and specifically as regards letters and sciences), at the two volumes that had been presented to him in such a devoted and filial fashion.

He could not, however, not remember another volume which modesty had prevented Father Hagen from remembering, but which was a part of the scientific domain of the academic family and the Vatican family itself, and more specifically of the Vatican Observatory. He meant to say the last and really glorious volume of the astrographic catalogue by which the completion of the glorious work of the Vatican Observatory was announced to the scientific world, a work carried out in collaboration with so many other distinguished observatories throughout the world, some of which, it is true, preceded it, but in such small numbers that the arrival of this last volume of Father Hagen should not be put amongst the arrival of the good last but amongst the arrival of the good first; and it was for this reason that the Holy Father was very happy to extend to him his most keenly-felt congratulations.

His Holiness also felt the need to add further words to say how pleased and happy he was to be

able to express here as well the feelings that had been generated in his spirit by that great undertaking whose planner and he could well say without exaggeration heroic executor, General Nobile, was there present. Those feelings which had constantly animated him and which certainly animate those who have a sense of the things that are really beautiful, really great, and really worthy of praise; he meant to say the appreciation of really great and important scientific results, even though not intended, as is said, for the general public, even though not having the virtues to gain that easy applause which fortunate even though not very worthy and not very useful undertakings easily secure: he meant to say sympathy for all those noble endeavours which are wisely prepared and carefully thought through for other ends and noble goals; he meant to say sincere applause for the employment of the high and great virtues of constancy, tenacity, real strength, patience, heroic resistance, virtues for that matter so generous and beneficial, and with such devoted feeling remembered, the virtues of human solidarity, human benevolence, human and Christian charity to help very great needs and very pressing necessities; he meant to say the admiration that nobody had been able to deny, and would ever be able to deny, to one of those great actions which reach the highest forms of beauty and the sublime which can be encountered in life, the achievement which had made General Nobile, as it had been well said, the 'Crusader of the Pole'.

The Holy Father ended his address by imparting the Apostolic Blessing to all those present, and on all their kindly feelings and intentions.