



Address of the Secretary of State, Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, Given on Behalf of His Holiness Pope Pius XI



The Secretary of State (and future Pope Pius XII), Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, gives an address on behalf of Pius XI who is ill. The Cardinal describes how the Supreme Pontiff regards the Academy as a 'Scientific Senate'. Pius XI also believes that science and faith, which at times seem to be in contrast, are not so in reality, and that faith, which is an act of homage by the intellect to the truth revealed by the Creator, is never more worthy than when it is 'illuminated by the splendours of sciences'.

Most Reverend Eminences, Excellencies,
Illustrious Members of the Academy,

No doubt you regret that the token and august dignitary, at this solemn inauguration of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, is not the sovereign presence of the Supreme Pontiff. He was the one, who, in renewing the Old Institute of the New Lynxes, conceived and accomplished so greatly and nobly this outstanding Academy. Greater, I say, than your regret, is my own amazement and confusion at finding myself in the midst of you to represent him. He deigned this morning to entrust to me, so great an honour and office, in order to transmit to you, that paternal and apostolic welcome and greeting, which his heart and his thought pondered. He did this out of the high regard which he has of you, and in his ardour for the progress of the sciences, which he appreciates in you, such celebrated masters. To have seen you all present and assembled around him, his spirit would have exalted in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God, the giver of every good thing. But I know only too well what the office committed to me by his august goodness arouses in your souls, which are inclined towards every nobility of affection. First of all there is the yearning, more than knowing, to have a new confirmation of what has already been authoritatively

announced, namely, the reason why his Person is not present in the midst of you, this much revered Father and Founder of the Academy, in the fortunate moment of its awaited inauguration. The Holy Father, as I myself had the honour and joy of verifying this morning in the customary Audience, is feeling well, better than before. Yesterday, he was able to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But all things considered, and only at the last minute, did he consider it more prudent, not so as to spare himself this effort and trial, but rather to deprive himself of the greatest and most desired pleasure he would have had in performing it.

His absence is, consequently, an act of violence, which the Holy Father has done to his heart, and to his burning desire to reply to your no less eager expectation. But his absence is at the same time, and please allow that he may say so, a respectful homage to science, to that science which delves into the secrets and hidden limits of the strengths of human nature, so as to ensure a precious health recovered and strengthened. It is a respectful homage, which is both an honour for you and your knowledge, while at the same time it is a witness of esteem to the dictates of a science, which he has, if you like, intended to live up to with the institution of this Academy. In doing this he is mindful of the precept of Sacred Scripture: *Honora medicum propter necessitatem, etenim illum creavit Altissimus*.¹ God is the Lord of medicine too, and Lord of all the sciences; and the greatest example of this faith is the submission of a Pontiff. A Pontiff who wishes to live up to the word of He who watches over the precious life of the Common Father of the Christian people, so as to conserve his health. This is the good health, as has been restored to him by God, of an illustrious and sincere Watchman, who taxes his mind with his immense thoughtfulness for all the Churches, under the weight of his eighty years. He does not decline the work, and on the subject of work, he does not decline the pain, not even that pain of being unable to be with you himself, so sacrificing to God a yearning, whose accomplishment was so greatly desired and awaited by him. It was the desire to declare inaugurated this Scientific Senate, conceived and created by him, for the progress of science and human investigation, for the honour of the Apostolic See, that beacon of truth and salvation, for the knowledge and glory of that God, by the power of Whom all things were made, and without Whom nothing was made, of what has been made in heaven, on earth, and in the depths. It appeared to the Supreme Pontiff in all its brilliant light, as the powerful streams of the natural and rational sciences, and the great river of revealed wisdom springing forth from the same divine fount and descending to man. Since this latter wisdom springs from the deepest source, it is inaccessible to reason, but not to faith, and yet it is no less certain and true. When those sciences, wherever they may seek and meet the truth, from whatever part of the created universe, from the heavens, from the oceans, from the earthly abysses, are set free and shine upon the human genius, they may prepare and build the entrance hall of the temple of faith, the steps of the *Sancta Sanctorum*, behind the veil of which the secrets of the divinity lie hidden and throb. All nature is ordained to man, and the end of celestial motion, affirms Saint Thomas, is ordered to man, as to an ultimate end in the genus of generable and mobile beings.² But man in his turn is ordained and orientated towards that image and likeness, which signifies in him the face of God, and towards that glory which the heavens proclaim; towards that truth which the hand of God left as a fingerprint when he created the world and every thing, towards that greater truth which exalts the human genius beyond the stars and remains forever.

The words themselves of the August Pontiff will be worth much more than the poor expressions with which I had hoped to interpret his mind, and these I have the great honour of communicating to you. They are the very same words, which he would have wanted to speak to you, if he had been present here in person today. They are his words, in thought and heart, which will remain for all the days to come, with the solemn seal of apostolic authority and the foundation of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

His Holiness would have no doubt recalled an often encountered passage, one of the most serious that are contained in the Divine Books, and which appropriately regards the men of the Church, which can easily mean pupils and teachers of the faith and in general of the truth: *Quia tu scientiam repulisti, ego repellam te.*³ The Holy Father would have added that, in this the summit of his life, in this fullness of years which God wished to concede to him, it seemed to him not inopportune and not alien from his office, to also give further proof of the weight, which he gives to those divine words, showing himself not only completely alien to the rejection of science, but careful in fact to call it to himself, and to possess it for himself. For this reason, His Holiness thought that an excellent way of achieving this aim, would be to call around himself, your most worthy persons, illustrious members of the Academy, you who so well represent so great a science, in, it could be said, a universal approval.

It is true that there are some things in which science and faith seem to express irreconcilable difficulties and contrasts. But this apparent lack of reconciliation cannot be so in reality for the Holy Father, nor for the person who reflects for a little while on the fact that science is the research of the truth as it is found in the natural revelation of the created world, and faith is the homage shown by the created intellect to the truth directly revealed by the Creator. So it is evident that this homage shown by the created intellect to the direct revelation of the Creator will never be more worthy of both creature and Creator as when it is illuminated by the splendours of sciences. This conviction has inspired the Holy Father, and has greatly cheered his heart in the institution, or restitution which may be intended of this Academy, to which you, illustrious members of the Academy, come to bring the contribution truly sought after, of your names, of your science, of your works.

The good Father Gemelli, among the many to whom the Holy Father is always most grateful, has seen to replacing the Academic insignia of each one of you, and his Holiness feels sure that you will not regret it. The August Pontiff was reserving for himself the pleasure of delivering with his own hand the so-called Annual Medal, which I now give to you through his precise mandate. It is by now, as is well-known, the traditional custom of the Holy See to dedicate a special mint of the Pontifical Medal, the recollection of which is considered the most important event of the year. The Holy Father, for his part, has considered that his and your Academy – no less yours than his – was precisely the event which this year deserved such a dedication. You, yourselves, for your part have inspired the composition of it for him, personifying (as has already been said) science so worthily: You have recalled more vividly to his mind the great images of those great spirits which truly seem sent by God the Creator to reveal more amply the splendours of science, and likewise those upon whom it truly pleased Him to impress the most far-reaching footprint of the Creator, His Spirit.

The Medal, which I am about to hand over to you in the name of the Holy Father, imparts everything to you and better than any one word could, presenting you with easily recognisable images, since they are historical: Volta, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci. Their scientific contribution needs no reminder, since you are among the greatest knowers of it: Volta with the wonders of electricity, Leonardo with the universality of his scientific genius, Michelangelo, a master not only in literature, but also in true and proper science with the wonders of his sacred and profane, civil and military architecture. The Holy Father did not even wish to remind you of these things. He reserved rather for himself and for you the satisfaction of recalling in the great Volta, the catechist of children in his parish at Como, in Michelangelo, the builder of Saint Peter's cupola, in Leonardo, the wonderful multiple scientific spirit who left in his will a legacy of Masses to be offered for his soul, the most concise, most comprehensive, most profound manner of professing even in detail all the truths of his catholic, dogmatic and practical faith.

Whereupon, the Holy Father thought he would end his words, and the expression of all his satisfaction and paternal recognition for your presence, by indicating to you in these three great men, a great threefold warning, a magnificent threefold programme, and a most glorious threefold example.

Such is, O Illustrious Members of the Academy, the August Message. Allow me, therefore, to gather into a garland all the glory of your hard work and your merits, and present them with you as an offering, to the heart of the Supreme Pontiff, so that he may find in them, along with the perfume of all his most joyful hope, the balsam of his missed presence, which is personified in his spirit and his will, which today gives perennial life to this Pontifical Academy.

And with this, in the name of the Holy Father, I declare the first academic year inaugurated and open.

1 *Si* 38:1.

2 *Contra Gentiles*, Bk. III, Ch. 22.

3 *Ho* 4:6.