



Address to the Plenary Session and to the Study Week on the Subject 'The Problem of Cosmic Radiation in Interplanetary Space'



The Supreme Pontiff stresses that the Church welcomes science and looks with favour upon scientific research because it leads to a 'more complete knowledge of man and the universe, according to the command given by God to Adam'. He hopes that the tensions between scientific research and the demands of faith will become less marked and affirms that science helps humanity to understand more clearly the truth of the creation and is an expression of praise for the Creator. Referring to the imminent Second Vatican Council, he states that it, too, is dedicated to the search for truth.

Gentlemen,

It is our pleasant task today to receive the President and Members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, together with the scientists who have come from all over the world to take part in the study week on 'The Problem of Cosmic Radiation in Interplanetary Space'.

Last year, we conveyed to the Pontifical Academy our good wishes on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation by our predecessor, the great and learned Pius XI. This year, we have the joy of personally and gladly bidding you welcome to our house.

For in your persons, Gentlemen, permit me to say, it is science itself which the Church welcomes, that science which the scholars of the whole world, united in peaceful research, strive to advance by pooling the results of their labours.

On that account we are happy to be able to present to Professor Bengt Erik Andersson, the young and distinguished physiologist of the Royal Institute of Veterinary Medicine at Stockholm, the gold

medal bearing the revered name of the founder of Our Pontifical Academy.

The Church gladly encourages the researches which are being carried out the world over, and which lead to more complete knowledge of man and the universe, according to the command given by God to Adam in the first pages of Genesis.¹ Thus we congratulate with all our heart this young scientist, who is an authority on the nervous mechanisms of hunger, thirst and body temperature, and we express our best wishes for the fruitfulness of his scientific career, in the service of humanity.

We must also point out, Gentlemen, with particular satisfaction, the timeliness of the subject chosen for your study week 'The Problem of Cosmic Radiation in Interplanetary Space'. While it would be superfluous to emphasise its appropriateness, permit us at least to mention the close interest that the Church takes in those problems which are rightly engaging the attention of the men of our time, and which are the object of scientific investigation by leading specialists. You know how much we share the delight and satisfaction deriving from the brilliant results obtained by the scientists and technicians of our day, who have succeeded in taming nature in a way which, but lately, would have seemed impossible to the most fertile imagination.

We said recently: 'Oh! How we wish that these undertakings would signify a homage rendered to God, Creator and supreme Legislator. May these historic events, which will have their place in the annals of the scientific knowledge of the cosmos, likewise become the expression of a true and peaceful progress, contributing their share to the solid foundation of the brotherhood of man'.²

We have entered, thank God, upon an epoch when, let us hope, questions about opposition between the conquests of the human mind and the demands of faith will become less frequent. The First Vatican Council, in 1869-1870, stated clearly the relations between reason and faith. The exciting discoveries and achievements of the twentieth century, far from casting doubt on these solidly based truths, help the mind to a deeper appreciation of their value. The progress of science, while permitting us to understand better the extraordinary richness of creation, enriches the praise which the creature renders in thanksgiving to his Creator, who is the Redeemer of our souls. The heart of man, as also his intelligence, remains ever eager to reach the absolute and to surrender itself to it.

On the eve of the opening, now close at hand, of the Ecumenical Council, we cannot but call to your mind, Gentlemen, this great Assembly and the promises that it holds out, supported by the prayers of Catholics and by the expectation of the whole world. It presents to us the vision of a gathering, at once fraternal, pacific and spiritual, which should be devoted entirely to the praise of God and to the service of man, in his noblest aspirations to know the truth, to seek to attain it and to embrace it lovingly.

Such are the thoughts, Gentlemen, suggested to us by the presence of your illustrious and learned assembly. We are happy to have been able to meet you and to let you know the great interest that we take in your labours. With all our heart we invoke the abundance of divine graces on your study week, on yourselves and on your families, in token of which we impart to you a special Apostolic Benediction.

¹ Cf. *Gn* 9:7.

2 *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 August 1962.