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Francis to the Vatican Observatory Summer School: the desire to understand the universe, God's creation, is shared by men and women of different cultures and religions

Vatican City, 11 June 2016 – The Holy Father today addressed the participants in the 15th Summer School organised by the Jesuit Fathers of the Vatican Observatory, young astronomers from various countries and different cultures, "a sign of how diversity can greatly enrich scientific research", and in this case the "complex and exciting activity of studying the universe, the incomparable gift of the Creator".

"Pope Leo XIII established the Vatican Observatory in 1891, exactly 125 years ago, not least to confirm the Church's support for 'true and solid science, whether human or divine'", he recalled, adding that over the years, the Observatory has sought to fulfil its original purpose by employing new scientific instruments as well as the tools of dialogue and cooperation with other centres of research.

He went on to highlight that their presence at this summer school is also a sign that the desire to understand the universe, God's creation, and our own place in it, is shared by men and women of very diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. "We all dwell under the same sky. We are all moved by the beauty revealed in the cosmos and reflected in the study of the heavenly bodies and substances. In this sense, we are united by the desire to discover the truth about how this marvellous universe operates; and in this, we draw ever closer to the Creator." With reference to the "providential" theme of this year's summer school, the study of water in the solar system and elsewhere, Francis underlined that we are all aware of how essential water is here on earth, taking into consideration that in our time access to pure water continues to be "an issue of justice for the human race, for rich and poor alike".

"Scientific research demands great commitment, yet can sometimes prove lengthy and tiresome. At the same time, it can, and should be, a source of deep joy. I pray that you will be able to cultivate that interior joy and allow it to inspire your work. Share it with your friends, your families and your nations, as well as with the international community of scientists with whom you work. May you always find joy in your research and share the fruit of your studies with humility and fraternity", the Pope concluded.