



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZED BY THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY

*Hall of Popes
Friday, 18 September 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome all of you who represent the working community of the Vatican Observatory, and I thank Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello for introducing our meeting.

“Deum Creatorem venite adoremus”. With these words engraved on a marble plaque on the wall of one of the telescope domes at the Papal Residence in Castel Gandolfo, Pius XI began his discourse inaugurating the new Observatory on 29 September 1935.

Indeed, rather than a scientific problem to be solved, the universe is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise (cf. Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, n. 12). “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us” (*ibid.*, n. 84). St Ignatius of Loyola truly understood this language. He recounted that his greatest consolation was looking at the sky and the stars because this made him feel a tremendous desire to serve the Lord (*Autobiography*, 11).

With the reestablishment of the Observatory at Castel Gandolfo, Pius XI also decreed that its management be entrusted to the Society of Jesus. Throughout these years, the Observatory astronomers have continued the paths of their research, creative paths, following in the footsteps of the Jesuit mathematicians and astronomers of the Collegio Romano, from Fr Christoph Clavius to Fr Angelo Secchi, to Fr Matteo Ricci and so many others. On this anniversary I am also pleased to recall the discourse that Benedict XVI addressed to the Fathers at the last General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, in which he stated that the Church has a pressing need of religious ready to dedicate their life to being on the very frontier between faith and human knowledge, faith and modern science.

In these days, you, Fathers and Brothers, along with scholar associates, gathered to discuss your research and topics concerning the dialogue between science and religion. In this regard, St John Paul II stated: "What is important is that the dialogue should continue and grow in depth and scope" (*Letter to Fr George V. Coyne, SJ, 1 June 1988*). And he asked: "Is the community of the world religions, including the Church, ready to enter into a more thoroughgoing dialogue with the scientific community, a dialogue in which the integrity of both religion and science is supported and the advance of each is fostered?" (cf. *ibid.*).

Within the context of interreligious dialogue, now more than ever, scientific research on the universe can offer a unique perspective, shared by believers and non-believers, which can help to achieve a deeper religious understanding of creation. In this sense the Schools of Astrophysics, which the Observatory has organized in the last 30 years, present a valuable opportunity for young astrophysicists from around the world to dialogue and cooperate in the search for the truth.

Additionally during your conference you also discussed the importance of communicating that the Church and her Pastors foster, encourage and promote authentic science, as Leo XIII emphasized (cf. *Motu Proprio Ut Mysticam*). It is very important that you share with people the gift of your scientific knowledge of the universe, freely giving what you have freely received.

In the spirit of gratitude to the Lord for the witness of science and faith that the members of the Observatory have borne in these decades, I would like to encourage you to continue the journey with your colleagues, and with those who share the enthusiasm and toil of the exploration of the universe. It is a journey that you also take in the company of the Observatory staff, of benefactors and friends, and of so many people of good will. Yes, we are all on a journey to the common house of heaven, where we will be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe (cf. Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, n. 243).

May Almighty God, who sustains in existence the whole universe, through the intercession of the Virgin Mother, fill you with his peace and bless you.