



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE "CAVALIERI DEL LAVORO"

Friday, 11 May 1979 *Gentlemen!* I am honoured and happy at your presence and I thank you heartily for the gesture of kind deference which led you to desire this meeting on the occasion of the solemn presentation of the Fifth Marconi International Fellowship. Extending my sincere congratulations to the person selected this year, Prof. John R. Pierce of California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California, I am glad to extend my felicitations also to the eminent scholars on whom the Prize was conferred in past years and who have wished to be present at this Audience. I then greet Mrs Gioia Marconi Braga, the President and organizer name and which is meant to keep alive in the world her father's noble ideals of generous philanthropy. I owe special thanks, further, to Ing. Bruno Valenti, President of the National Federation of the Cavalieri del Lavoro, for the kind and appropriate words with which he interpreted the feelings of those present. I wish to express my appreciation and my esteem to all. It seems to me worthy of note that, at this meeting, persons engaged in advanced scientific research are side by side with others who have distinguished themselves by the contribution they have made, with their industriousness, to the national economy. It is a kind of ideal union between genius and diligence, in which any thinking person can easily recognize the source of all true human progress. It is, in fact, by means of the work of vast human structures that the brilliant intuitions of an individual or a small team of researchers are expressed as services useful for the common welfare. It seems to me, therefore, that the motto "Ingenium pro bono humanitatis", by which the gold Prize just mentioned is inspired, can well be taken as the greatest inspirer of the commitment of each one and as the criterion of evaluation of its "quality". I mean, it will be a deserving and worthy commitment if it is seen to be useful for man's real good. This is an aspect which I am eager to emphasize. The Church, in fact, as I recalled in my Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, "cannot abandon man, for his 'destiny', that is to say his election, calling, birth and death, salvation or perdition, is so closely and unbreakably linked with Christ" (n. 14). Well, man, today, is in danger: menaced by "the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect" (*ibid.*, n. 15). Here lies the "drama of present-day human existence". "Man lives increasingly in fear", because "he is afraid that what he produces—...and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative—can radically turn against himself" (*ibid.*, n. 15). Now, it is clear that all that does violence to man and mortifies him cannot be considered useful for his real good, nor can it be described as true progress, even if it constitutes a result that is excellent "technically". It is important, therefore, that responsible men should have the courage to denounce a science that proves to be "dishonoured by the cruelty of its applications" (P. Valéry). It is important that they should commit themselves with all their might to guiding their own path and that of their fellow-men towards goals of real human growth. True progress, in fact, is only what contributes to make man more mature spiritually, more aware of his dignity, more open to others,

freer in his choices: that is, what aims at forming a man who knows the "reason why" and not just the "how" of things. Never has man been so rich in things, means, and techniques, and never so poor in indications about their destination. To restore to man awareness of the ends for which he lives and works, is the task to which we are all called in this end of the century, which concludes the second millennium of the Christian era. This task can be carried out only by those who believe "in the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter" (Encycl. *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 17). The hope, therefore, that I wish to express in this circumstance, in which I have the pleasure of addressing a gathering of persons so representative of the world of science and work, is the following: that the ideal of spending one's own energies "pro bono humanitatis" may shine like the Pole star in the mind of each one and inspire his every initiative, sustaining his generous effort even at difficult moments: to work for man with sincere love is to honour and serve God. I strengthen these wishes of mine with the Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly grant to you and to the beloved members of your families, invoking the constant help of the Lord on your daily round of toil. I repeat my congratulations to Professor John R. Pierce for the honour that has been bestowed on him and the trust that has been placed in him to work "pro bono humanitatis" in an effective and worthy manner. My sincere felicitations go also to the distinguished scientists present who have received earlier fellowships. I ask God to uphold and guide you in your service of humanity and to fill you with his blessings. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana