



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE FOUNDING MEMBERS
OF THE SOCIETY OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY**

Monday, 19 June 1989

Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, the founding members of the *Society of the Vatican Observatory*. Your visit enables me to express my gratitude for your cooperation in two initiatives of the Observatory: first, the construction of the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope in Arizona; and secondly, the planning of further work on issues related to the encounter between faith and science.

With respect to the telescope, it is gratifying to see how, in a remarkably creative way, the practical elements of engineering, the theoretical understanding of light and the desire to see further and more accurately into the Universe, have blended to achieve what previously had been only a dream – a new generation of the world's most powerful telescopes. This new telescope will be the first in a series of instruments which will enable scientists to see ten times further into the Universe than ever before.

In order to function as efficiently as possible, these telescopes must be located on remote mountain sites, many of which are treasured ecological zones. I know that, as scientists, you cherish and respect nature. Hence, while striving to fathom the ultimate frontiers of the Universe, you have sought to interfere as little as possible in the natural processes of the earth, that small but precious part of the Universe from which you observe.

I am pleased to learn that, with all the demands placed on the financial and physical resources of a country so abundantly blessed as the United States, you have been able to generate from private donors the resources needed for the new telescope, the astrophysics facility and post-

doctoral fellowship. Upon all who have contributed to this initiative I invoke God's loving guidance and protection.

Because the work of the Vatican Observatory proceeds under the auspices of the Church, it is only natural that you should address the many questions which arise from the relationship between science and faith. You have taken a decisive step in that direction through the publication of *Physics, Philosophy and Theology*. I express my wholehearted encouragement for this endeavour.

It is clear that you are only at the beginning of these new ventures, but we can be grateful to the Lord that they have begun well. With his continued blessings and the collaboration of yourselves and your associates, I pray that you will succeed in your service to the Church and to the human family. God be with you all!

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