



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE SUMMER COURSE
OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY**

Thursday, 26 June 2014

Good morning,

I am pleased to welcome you, the professors and students of the Summer Course organized by the Vatican Observatory on the theme “Galaxies: Near and Far, Young and Old”. I also offer a cordial greeting to the Jesuit Fathers and Brothers and to the staff of the Observatory. It is gratifying to see the large number of qualified professors and students, drawn from twenty-three different countries, who have taken part in this international programme. In a particular way I thank the instructors who have devoted so much time and energy to introducing these young astronomers to the demanding yet fascinating work of studying the universe, the precious gift of the Creator. I also thank the benefactors whose generosity has provided for various study grants.

For nearly a month now, you have been engaged not only in the study of galaxies, under the direction of professors who are experts in this field, but also in sharing your own cultural and religious traditions. In this way, you have offered an impressive example of dialogue and fruitful cooperation. During these weeks of study you have also made lasting friendships and laid the groundwork for future forms of collaboration. Seeing all of you here today is like looking at a marvelous mosaic made up of people from throughout the world. It is only right that men and women everywhere should have access to research and scientific training. The hope that one day all peoples will be able to enjoy the benefits of science is one which spurs all of us on, scientists in particular.

The Vatican Observatory School in Astrophysics is thus a place where young people the world over can engage in dialogue and collaboration, helping one another in the search for truth, which in this case is concretized in the study of galaxies. This simple and practical initiative shows how

the sciences can be a fitting and effective means for promoting peace and justice.

Here too we see a further reason for the Church's commitment to dialogue with the sciences on the basis of the light provided by faith: it is her conviction that faith is capable of both expanding and enriching the horizons of reason (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 238). In this dialogue, the Church rejoices in the marvelous progress of science, seeing it as a sign of the enormous God-given potential of the human mind (cf. *ibid*, 243), even as a mother rejoices and is rightly proud as her children grow "in wisdom, and age and grace" (*Lk* 2:52).

Finally, I would also encourage you to share with people in your own countries the knowledge about the universe which you have acquired. Only a fraction of the global population has access to such knowledge, which opens the heart and the mind to the great questions which human beings have always asked: Where do we come from? Where are we going? Does this universe made up of hundreds of millions of galaxies have any meaning? ... The search for an answer to these questions can lead us to an encounter with the Creator, the loving Father, for "in him we live and move and have our being" (*Acts* 17:28).

May the almighty and merciful God, who "tells the number of the stars and calls each one by name" (*Pss* 147:4), fill all of you with his peace and grant you his blessing.