



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS
IN THE SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TWIN STUDIES**

Monday, 28 August 1989

*Professor Gedda,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am very pleased to greet you, the distinguished physicians, biologists, psychologists and educators who have come to Rome in order to participate in the *Sixth International Congress on Twin Studies*. I assure you of my best wishes for a fruitful exchange of research and ideas.

The importance of this Congress is apparent not only from the breadth and complexity of the matters under discussion, but also from the multidisciplinary approach which the International Society for Twin Studies has been able to provide in each of its Congresses. Your Society is fulfilling its stated objectives of research and development in all those scientific fields which are allied to Twin Studies. As a result, it is making a solid contribution to the nascent science of Twin Studies itself, while also addressing the concrete needs of twins and their families.

2. At present, it is widely recognized that the study of twinning, particularly in the areas of physiology and pathology, *has expanded significantly our knowledge of genetics* in general and of heredity in particular. Here too, your Society has made a marked contribution, and has stimulated new interest on the part of many scientists and researchers.

Indeed, twinning has proved to be a rich source of new biological data regarding the beginnings of human life. The comparison of biological processes present in twins has helped to clarify the extent to which both heredity and environment affect human life. As a result, the many developments within the field of Twin Studies serve to increase our knowledge not only of various questions of genetics, but also of questions concerned with the specific phenomenon of twinning:

its appearance, as well as the problems it raises in terms of physiology, and family or social adjustment.

The study of multiple pregnancy also tends to strengthen the conviction that *the defence of life and the dignity of the human person must be of paramount concern in all scientific research*. Similarly, recent developments in our understanding of the phenomenon of twinning have helped curtail a certain tendency which considered the termination of pregnancy a justifiable medical procedure. Such developments have also demonstrated the unacceptability, in moral as well as in strictly scientific terms, of all forms of genetic manipulation.

Recent advances in Twin Studies have also yielded results which can find fruitful application in the fields of general human physiology and pathology. This progress in turn has served to confirm the fact that, once the divine gift of life becomes the object of study and research, *every individual contribution to our knowledge immediately becomes of service to the entire human species and to each of its members*. Twin Studies have thus contributed to the growing recognition that *all human life is sacred*, and that any assault on life, especially that of procured abortion, is in fact a denial of God's law as it is written in the heart of each person.

3. The large number of twins in today's world, and the many issues connected with their upbringing and education, both at home and in the larger society, have raised a number of complex problems.

Your Congress has chosen to examine some of these, especially as they relate to *the adjustment of twins within family and social settings*. Solutions to these problems will require not only joining forces with many agencies, but also training specialized personnel and encouraging both families and various social institutions to become more sensitive to twins and to the challenges they face. I am certain that this Congress, composed as it is of so many distinguished scientists and researchers from throughout the world, will contribute significantly to progress in this direction.

The programme of your Congress is clearly inspired by the ends and objectives which your Society has officially professed. But if your work is regarded from a spiritual standpoint, it can be seen that it is also inspired by a *vision of man which finds in Christian revelation a sure basis for its hope and for a truly constructive optimism*. The times in which we live, much more than any period in the past, demand that new discoveries be ever more "humane", ever more beneficial to humanity. And *the measure of a humanity come-of-age can only be a full and unconditional service offered to life*.

On this earth, man is the only creature whom God created and willed for himself, since it was God who immediately created the spiritual soul of each human being. For this reason, God alone remains the Lord of life, *from its beginnings to its natural end*. When research and higher studies on man and the human condition draw their inspiration from this elementary yet profound truth, not

only do they place themselves at the genuine service of man, but they also come to know a real and irreversible progress, whatever their area of reflection or research. This truth has found a striking confirmation in the recent advances made in the field of Twin Studies.

Ladies and Gentlemen: as scientists, you have come together from all over the world in order to share the results of your research, to raise new questions and to establish an ever more fruitful collaboration with one another. May all that you accomplish in these days be an authentic defence and promotion of the dignity of the human person. May Almighty God bless your noble work, your families, and all those who benefit from your dedicated service.

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