



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE « AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY »
AND OF THE ACCADEMIA DEI LINCEI**

Tuesday, 21 May 1996

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the distinguished members of the *American Philosophical Society* and of the *Accademia dei Lincei*, on the occasion of your joint meeting here in Rome. As a former teacher of philosophy, I have a particular feeling of esteem and respect for your scholarly pursuits and endeavors.

Both of your societies have a long history of service to thought and culture. The *Accademia dei Lincei* in fact traces its origins back to the beginning of the 17th century, and since then it has been an outstanding focal point of commitment to artistic, scientific and cultural interests. The *American Philosophical Society* is the oldest honorary learned society in the United States, having been founded in 1743 and having had as its first president the renowned Benjamin Franklin. Among the many celebrated members of your society you count a number of the Founding Fathers of your nation and a host of Nobel Laureates.

The quest for knowledge, which includes philosophical reflection on the deeper meaning of all reality, is as important today as it ever was. Knowledge is the lamp which enlightens the path of our human journey. In fulfilling her mission on behalf of the human family, the Church is a willing partner in that deep and respectful dialogue between science and faith which makes us all servants of the truth which sets us free (Cfr. *Io* 8, 32).

In an age marked by an unprecedented explosion of scientific and technological knowledge, the old ideal of striving for the unification of knowledge by reconciling all the elements of truth obtainable from the natural, human and sacred sciences no longer seems feasible. Nevertheless,

if a simple synthesis of present-day knowledge is unthinkable, there remains the task of pursuing a *necessary integration of knowledge*, in order to avoid the pitfalls of a too pragmatic fragmentation and over-specialization and, most importantly, to offer the possibility of a truly human culture, a genuine "humanitas". By defending and up-holding the essential value of rational discourse on all aspects of reality, you effectively contribute to man's search for understanding, wisdom and ultimate meaning.

May Almighty God bless you all and sustain you in your noble endeavors.

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