



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS
OF THE INTERNATIONAL PAUL VI AWARD CEREMONY**

Saturday, 5 July 2003

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am happy to meet with you on the occasion of the award presentation conferred in memory of my venerable Predecessor, the servant of God Paul VI.

To all present I extend my sincere welcome. I cordially greet Cardinals Giovanni Battista Re and Paul Poupard, the Bishop of Brescia Most Reverend Giulio Sanguineti and the other Prelates who have joined them. I extend my deferential greetings to the civil Authorities who are representing the public Institutions of Brescia, as well as those who are responsible for the Paul VI Institute, beginning with your President, Dr Giuseppe Camadini, whom I thank for the words with which he has expressed your sentiments. I renew my appreciation for the successful initiatives of this outstanding Institution that contributes to keeping alive in the Church and in the hearts of men of good will a spirit of gratitude for this great Pope.

2. Today's meeting is taking place in the context of two important occurrences: the 40th anniversary of the election to the Papacy of the servant of God Paul VI and the 25th anniversary of his death.

His moving memory remains alive and rooted more than ever in the spirit of the people. Paul VI, who was deeply aware of the anxieties and the hopes of his time, and who succeeded in understanding the experiences of his contemporaries, illuminated them with the light of the Christian message. He pointed out to them the source of the truth in Christ, the only Redeemer, font of true joy and of authentic peace.

May the example of this zealous Pastor of the Universal Church encourage and stimulate believers ever more deeply to be witnesses of hope at the dawn of the third millennium.

3. The prestigious award, that rightly is conferred in his name every five years to a personality or Institution distinguished in a significant way in the field of the culture of religious inspiration, undoubtedly represents a recognition of the perennial interest that the personality of Papa Montini inspires. To date, it has gone to scholars in the fields of theology, music, ecumenism and the promotion of human rights. This year it is presented to the well-known French researcher, Professor Paul Ricoeur, to whom I direct a cordial and respectful greeting, thanking him for his courteous and profound words just now addressed to me. He is also known for his generous contribution to ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and the Reformed Churches. His research shows how fruitful the relationship between philosophy and theology, between faith and culture, can be; a relationship that, as I wished to recall in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, must be "construed as a circle. Theology's source and starting-point must always be the word of God.... Yet, since God's word is Truth, the human search for truth - philosophy, pursued in keeping with its own rules - can only help to understand God's word better" (n. 73).

4. The selection, therefore, by the Paul VI Institute to honour a philosopher and at the same time a man of faith, pledged to the defense of human and Christian values, appears most opportune.

While I express heartfelt felicitations to Professor Paul Ricoeur, I assure each one of you present of my prayers, so that you may respond to the project that God has for you and for the Paul VI Institute.

5. I direct a deferential greeting also to the members of the "*Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice*" Foundation, assembled for their annual meeting, under the presidency of Count Lorenzo Rossi di Montelera, whom I cordially greet. I extend my greeting to the Prelates, to the Members of the Administrative Council and to the participants of the Convention.

While I am grateful for the concrete assistance offered to the Holy See, I pray to the Lord for each one of them, for their activities and for all their loved ones.

6. With these sentiments, while I extend to each of those present at this Audience the wish for a profitable undertaking in your own field of work, I affectionately impart to all my Blessing.