



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF
OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY ON THE OCCASION
OF THE THIRD VATICAN OBSERVATORY
SUMMER SCHOOL IN ASTROPHYSICS**

Saturday, 7 July 1990

Dear Friends,

1. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome all of you: students, faculty and staff of the Vatican Observatory, on this occasion of the *Third Vatican Observatory Summer School in Astrophysics*. It is, indeed, an exciting time to be involved in scientific research in astrophysics. Telescopes already launched or soon to be launched into space promise to expand the frontiers between the known and unknown universe beyond that even you young scientists can imagine. The mysteries of the universe which they can only begin to uncover will undoubtedly have a significant influence on the whole of your professional lives.

At the same times as these marvelous technological developments in space are taking place, here on the surface of the Earth several research centres, which have access to some of the best astronomical sites in the world, are constructing large telescopes with new technologies which will enable us to see as far out into the universe as, for instance, Hubble Space Telescope, although without the same spatial resolution.

2. While speaking of large ground-based telescopes, I wish to repeat to you what I have said already to those responsible for the construction of the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope to be placed this year on Mt Graham in Arizona. I do this because I realize that in your professional careers you will be required to make wise choices in the use of the resources of our small planet Earth in the quest for deeper knowledge of our vast universe. Last year I spoke to the Founders of the Society of the Vatican Observatory thus: "This new telescope will be the first in a

series of instruments which will enable scientists to see ten times farther 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” (John Paul II, *Address to the Founding Members of the Society of the Vatican Observatory*, 19 June 1989).

There is a growing sensitivity in our times to preserving *the harmony of mankind with the universe*. This is one of the reasons why I chose as the theme for this year’s World Day of Peace: “Peace with the Creator, Peace with his Creation”. I urge you, who are just beginning your professional careers in scientific research, to keep yourselves at peace with the creation that is the object of your study.

3. The *successful pursuit of science* depends, in the end, on the human intelligence which has not only produced the tools which you use but which must also *wisely direct their use*. The tools themselves are generally the privileged possession of the technologically advanced nations, but intelligence is the privileged possession of no single nation. Your presence here together is a proof of that fact. You twenty-five scholars come from twenty-two different nations scattered over the continents of Asia, Africa, Europe, South and North America. You are here because you are blessed with the intelligence and with the disciplined motivation required for scientific research. Your intelligence is both a gift and a challenge, and I am happy that through the workshop organized by the Vatican Observatory you are enabled both to nurture that gift and focus the challenge.

In closing, let me express the hope that you will cherish not only what you have learned here, but also the fact that you have learned it together. I wish you much success in your noble task. Upon all who are present here today, and upon your loved ones, I invoke God’s abundant blessings.