



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE NINTH PUBLIC MEETING
OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMIES**

Tuesday, 9 November 2004

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I am pleased to give you a special greeting on the occasion of the Ninth Public Meeting of the Pontifical Academies, a culminating moment of the multiple activities you have promoted during the course of this year.

I greet in particular Cardinal Paul Poupard, the President of the Council for Coordinating the Pontifical Academies, and I thank him for the dedication he pays to this duty. I also extend my greeting to the Bishops, Ambassadors, priests and representatives of the Pontifical Academies present, as well as to those who have not wished to miss this meeting.

2. Today's Public Meeting of the Pontifical Academies touches on an ever more significant theme: the *Via pulchritudinis* as the best way for the Christian faith and the culture of our time to meet, besides being a valuable instrument for the formation of the young generations.

In 2,000 years of history, the Church has travelled the path of beauty in many ways through sacred works of art that have accompanied prayer, the liturgy, the life of families and of Christian communities. Splendid architectural masterpieces, paintings, sculptures and miniatures, musical compositions, literature and plays, together with other works of art wrongly considered "minor", constitute authentic treasures that make us understand, through the language of beauty and of symbols, the profound syntony that exists between faith and art, between human creativity and the

work of God, author of every authentic beauty.

3. Would the people of today have been able to enjoy so vast an artistic patrimony if the Christian community had not encouraged and supported the creativity of numerous artists, offering them as a model and font of inspiration the beauty of Christ, Splendour of the Father?

For beauty to shine in its full splendour, however, it must be united to goodness and the sanctity of life. The luminous face of the good God, wonderful and just, must be made to shine in the world through the sanctity of its children.

It is what Jesus urges his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*" (Mt 5: 16). The testimony of Christians, if it also wants to influence ordinary society, must nourish itself with beauty in order to become an eloquent transparency of the beauty of God's love.

4. I turn again particularly to you, dear academics and artists! This is your duty: to nourish all that is an authentic expression of human genius, a reflection of divine beauty.

In the *Letter to Artists* I have emphasized our collaboration: "The Church hopes for a renewed 'epiphany' of beauty in our time and apt responses to the particular needs of the Christian community" (n. 10). You must always be conscious of this mission and the Lord will help you to take it to completion in an efficacious way.

To all the academicians, and especially to the members of the renowned *Pontificia Insigne Accademia di Belle Arti e Lettere dei Virtuosi al Pantheon*, I express my grateful appreciation for the work achieved. I hope that, with everyone's cooperation, a new Christian humanism can be promoted to blaze a trail of authentic beauty, and that it be proposed to everyone as the path of dialogue and peace between all peoples.

5. I am now pleased, on the advice of the Council for Coordinating the Pontifical Academies, to assign the Annual Prize of the Pontifical Academies to the Benedictine Abbey of Keur Moussa in Senegal, where Benedictines from the Motherhouse of Solesmes were placed to learn the traditions of Africa, faithfully conserving at the same time the liturgical patrimony received from the tradition of the Church.

I desire as well to offer a Medal of the Pontificate to the School of Cinematography "Ipotesi Cinema", founded and directed by Mr Ermanno Olmi, for its pedagogy founded on authentic humanism, and also to the Interuniversity Choir of Rome, directed by Maestro Don Massimo Palombella, for the service rendered to divine rite and musical culture.

I entrust each one of you and the various Institutions to which you belong to the maternal

protection of the Virgin Mary, whom we invoke as *Tota Pulchra*, the "All Beautiful". I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and I impart to you my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.