



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF SCIENTISTS**

Saturday, 27 March 1999

Mr President,

Distinguished Members of the World Federation of Scientists,

1. Welcome! I am pleased to offer my most sincere and warmest greetings to you who are involved in various forms of study and research. I thank Prof. Antonino Zichichi for his words expressing your common sentiments, illustrating at the same time the objectives and projects of your praiseworthy Federation.

Today's meeting, which reminds me of the one held 20 years ago during the first months of my Pontificate, is an excellent occasion to look at the future, analyzing all that has been achieved by science in our century, which has seen scientific progress unprecedented in the entire span of history. It is your intention to sketch out a partial but significant assessment of this progress.

First of all, a distinct and diversified *cultural* component can be noted, which consists mainly in a new vision of science characterized by the end of the "myth of progress", which claimed that science would soon find a solution to every human problem.

Another factor that concerns your scientific activity is the *economic* aspect, connected both with research and with the technological application of your discoveries. Huge financial resources are allocated and spent for this purpose, with legitimate concern over their use and the validity of the projects.

Next the *political* dimension of science appears to be of capital importance because of its implications for building peace. In this regard, your Federation intends to encourage a concrete exchange and generous sharing between scholars from different countries and cultural contexts.

2. Nor should we underestimate the growing closeness between scientific experimentation and the religious conception of reality, to which I sought to make a contribution in my recent Encyclical *Fides et ratio*. Although I denounced the serious risk of an exclusively scientific interpretation of phenomenal data (cf. *Fides et ratio*, n. 88), I wished to express admiration and encouragement for the work of scientists as tireless seekers of truth (cf. *ibid.*, n. 106). In fact, it is more necessary than ever that faith and science, having cleared the field of the mistakes and misunderstandings which have unfortunately occurred over the ages, should be open to ever deeper mutual understanding at the service of human life and dignity.

It is here that our gaze extends to a future rich in challenges and critical needs. Mr President, as you have just pointed out, planet Earth presents some which can no longer be postponed, since the health of one and all, as well as the very survival of peoples, is subject to widespread threats. Consequently, appropriate initiatives are required which, involving scientific volunteers and the responsible cooperation of cultural, economic and political agents, will help design projects aimed at safeguarding creation and aiding authentic human development.

3. In a few days' time, during the Easter Vigil the liturgy will have us listen once again to the ancient biblical narrative of creation in the Book of Genesis. God, Creator of the universe, entrusts the world to man so that he will preserve and cultivate it. In taking on this task, the human being must realize his full responsibility for so demanding a mission. Distinguished scientists, with the initiatives promoted by the World Federation of Scientists, you intend to make a specific contribution to carrying this out. It is a question of pilot projects in the area of global emergencies, which with courage and farsightedness you never tire of studying and proposing, thus creating a significant "scientific volunteer service" at the service of the common good.

I warmly encourage you to continue on this path and I accompany you with my prayers so that your work will bear abundant fruit.

As I invoke the motherly protection of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, upon each of you, I bless you, your families and your daily work.