



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II ON THE 10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LIFE

*Venerable Brothers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. With pleasure I send you my Message on the occasion of the day on which you are commemorating the *10th anniversary of the foundation of the Pontifical Academy for Life*. Once again I express my gratitude to each one of you for the Academy's high-quality service of spreading the "Gospel of life". I greet in particular Prof. Juan de Dios Vial Correa, President, Bishop Elio Sgreccia, Vice-President, and the entire Administrative Council.

First of all, I thank the Lord with you for your useful Institution which was added 10 years ago to the others created after the Council. The *doctrinal and pastoral Bodies of the Apostolic See* are the first to benefit from your collaboration with regard to the *knowledge and facts* that decisions in the area of moral norms regarding life require. This is the case with the Pontifical Councils for the Family and for Health Pastoral Care, as well as in response to requests from the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and from other Dicasteries and Offices.

2. As the years have passed, the importance of the Pontifical Academy for Life has become more and more evident. However, while progress in the biomedical sciences gives us a glimpse of promising prospects for the good of humanity and the treatment of chronic and distressing diseases, it also frequently presents *serious problems concerning the respect for human life and the dignity of the person*.

The growing control of medical technology in the process of human procreation, discoveries in the fields of genetics and molecular biology, changes in the therapeutic treatment of seriously-ill patients as well as the spread of currents of thought of a utilitarian or hedonistic inspiration are factors that can lead to aberrant conduct as well as to drafting laws which are unjust with regard to

the dignity of the person and the respect that the inviolability of innocent life requires.

3. Your contribution is also invaluable to intellectuals, especially Catholics, "who are called to be present and active in the leading centres where culture is formed, in schools and universities, in places of scientific and technological research..." (Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 98). The Pontifical Academy for Life was set up for this purpose, with the specific task "to study and to provide information and training about the principal problems of law and biomedicine pertaining to the promotion and protection of life, especially in the direct relationship they have with Christian morality and the directives of the Church's Magisterium" (Motu Proprio *Vitae Mysterium*, n. 4; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 9 March 1994, p. 3).

In a word, your highly responsible role includes the complex subject known today as "*bioethics*". I thank you for your commitment to examining specific issues of great interest and likewise for furthering the dialogue between scientific investigation and philosophical and theological reflection, guided by the Magisterium. Researchers, especially those who work in the field of biomedicine, must be made more and more aware of the beneficial enrichment that can derive from combining scientific rigour and the claims of anthropology and Christian ethics.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, may your service now with 10 years of experience continue to be increasingly appreciated and supported and provide the desired results in the field of the humanization of biomedical science and the convergence of scientific research and faith.

To this end, I invoke upon the Academy for Life continuous divine assistance through its Patroness, the Virgin Mary, and as I assure my remembrance in prayer to each one, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all, which I willingly extend to your collaborators and your loved ones.

From the Vatican, 17 February 2004

JOHN PAUL II