



13 October 1963



**Address to the Plenary Session and to the Study Week on the Subject 'The Econometric Approach to Development Planning'**

*In his first address to the Academy, Paul VI affirms that the Church wishes to 'maintain the most sincere relations with the contemporary scientific world'. He observes that religion is not in opposition to science but is itself 'the supreme science of life' and thus encourages the scientist to pursue his inquiries into truth, which 'exists'. The Pope also makes an appeal to those in authority 'that they may never abuse science'; he hopes that science will never become 'a peril, a nightmare, an instrument of destruction for human life'. He concludes by repeating John XXIII's call for the banning of nuclear weapons.*

Gentlemen,

We do not propose to deliver a speech. Not that we should not have plenty to say to you; this meeting with the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in fact calls to mind many topics, questions, feelings which it would be worthwhile to express, but this is not the time. In these days, absorbed as they are by the Council and the problems to which it gives rise, we have no time to spare. This will be merely a brief greeting that we address to you, a greeting full of cordiality for the persons that we have the great honour of meeting, full of respect for this institution that we are happy to see here once again.

As you have just said, Mr. President, an esteem of long standing and a sincere friendship binds us to your Academy. We are glad to be able today to renew acquaintance with it and to greet you first of all, Mr. President, the worthy successor of the late lamented and unforgettable Padre Gemelli.

It is for us a joy to find the Academy, and all its members, dedicated to the faithful carrying out of its traditional activities. We take this opportunity to express to the veteran Academicians our devoted esteem and to bid a happy welcome to those whom we have not previously had the pleasure of greeting as members of this illustrious society.

We wish also to express our gratitude to those scientists who have accepted the invitation of our Academy and who have come to take part in this study week, bringing to it the valuable contribution of their learned research and honouring it with their presence.

To those who belong to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and to those who participate in its work or honour it with their friendly interest, we wish to reaffirm our high esteem for this institution, and the resolution we have taken to grant it the support and honour which will ensure its stability and favour its development.

We have inherited a solemn responsibility from the Pope who founded your Academy, for whose members and promoters we cherish a profound esteem; we have a keen appreciation of the importance and the needs of modern science and a lively sense of the duty, the interest, and in a way the necessity, for the Catholic Church to maintain the most sincere relations with the contemporary scientific world. Finally we may say that we feel ourselves stimulated by the certainty that our religion not only does not pose any real objection to the study of

natural truths, but that, without crossing the bounds of its proper sphere, or transgressing those of the domain of science properly so-called, it can promote scientific research, honour its results and help them to be better used for the good of humanity.

The religion which we have the happiness to profess is, in fact, the supreme science of life. It is thus the highest and most beneficent mentor in all those domains where life is manifested. It might seem to be absent when it not merely permits, but directs, the scientist to obey only the laws of truth. But looking more closely, it will be seen to be still beside him, to encourage him in his difficult task of exploration, assuring him that truth exists, that it is intelligible, splendid, divine; and also to remind him at every step that thought is an instrument for the conquest of truth and that it should be used with such respect for its own laws that one feels continually the transcendent responsibility that it imposes.

This will show you, Gentlemen, how seriously and with what favour we regard this institution, which we like to consider as representative of the scientific world, to which we send through you, its authoritative interpreters, our respectful greetings and encouragement.

A symbol of this greeting is the Pius XI Gold Medal which we have the pleasure of presenting to Professor Aage Bohr, a son of Denmark, a nation whose signal merits are appreciated by us, a scientist celebrated for his studies of nuclear structure and for the theoretical analysis of the motions of atomic nuclei. May the granting of this award be a token of respect and encouragement, both for the worthy person of this young professor as well as for the noble company, nowadays a whole army, of scientists devoted to the exploration of the marvels of the physical microcosm.

Coming from our priestly hands may this award constitute a warm invitation, an evangelical appeal, to all those in authority, that they may never abuse science, or rather its multiple practical applications – in particular those of nuclear science and its terrible possibilities – that they may never make it a peril, a nightmare, an instrument of destruction for human life. Another of our wise predecessors, Pius XII, already in 1943 and again in 1948, addressing this same Academy, warned against the terrible and menacing possibility that atomic energy might become fatal for humanity. And, still more recently, Pope John XXIII, of happy memory, in his now famous Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, expressed the wish that atomic weapons be banned.

We wish to make our own their fatherly appeal and to hope, with all good and wise men everywhere in the world, that this threat to the safety and peace of humanity may be averted.

In your peaceful assembly you are, thank God, far removed from these sombre prospects. You will be speaking of 'The Econometric Approach to Development Planning'. This is the subject of your study week, a subject which seeks to gather together the latest results of a new branch of science, econometrics, and to present them to political economists in order to aid them in formulating those plans for a more stable security and for greater development which can contribute so much to the well-being and peace of nations.

We do not intend to enter upon this subject or to comment on it, but we are happy that such eminent men have come to address it before this Academy, and we thank them for this important contribution which they are making to the advance of science and to the reputation of this Academy. We are happy to congratulate you on the choice, the method of treatment and the aim of a subject as fruitful for scientific research as it is rich in practical applications. We are sure also that these econometric studies, integrated with the rest of our knowledge of human phenomena, including those in the field of economics, will truly prove of great utility in the ordered progress of human civilisation.

We give you a fatherly greeting and beg the divine protection for you and for your labours, bestowing on you all our Apostolic Blessing.