



The Growth of Truth Can Lead to the Growth of Charity

Address to Inaugurate the Academic Year of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences 'New Lynxes'

Pius XI observes that charity always gains from what is acquired in truth and for this reason 'the Holy Church had never feared the truth'. He also stresses that the Apostles had been entrusted with a teaching and 'almost a scientific function' and adds that the Academicians, in their teaching of science, are themselves engaged in an apostolate. Speaking shortly before Christmas, he dwells upon the Three Wise Men of the Nativity and observes that they are an expression of science coming to render homage to the Deus Scientiarum Dominus .

The August Pontiff felt above all that it was his duty to thank his beloved sons for the true richness of the gifts of science which had been offered to him. He then hastened to add immediately what he thought about his solemn inauguration of this new hall, which had been added to the very beautiful, but unfortunately restricted, Casina Pio IV. It seemed to him that a more beautiful first use, a more suitable inauguration, a more promising opening, one could not have than in this treasure of great undertakings, of successes, of acknowledgements, even very great ones, of which this Pontifical Academy of Sciences had been the donor and the praiseworthy source. For this reason, His Holiness thanked God first and foremost, the giver of every perfect gift, and then the Academicians, beloved sons, who were so skilled, for that flowering of studies and for those results which were not only praiseworthy but really fine, and useful specifically to the true progress and increase of science, in the range and riches of truth.

St. Augustine said this one day with one of the most beautiful and brilliant phrases that had ever been pronounced: *Dilatentur spatia charitatis*; ¹ one might just as well say: *Dilatentur spatia veritatis*, not least because in the order of the things, in varying degrees in the short term, charity always gained from what was acquired in truth. It was for this reason that the Holy Church had never feared the truth, but she had made herself the herald of truth everywhere, always, and with all people.

To these good wishes and happy commencements of things, His Holiness only wanted to add two observations, which provided him with great comfort and joy. They were two circumstances, almost two falling rays of celestial light, which made this gathering of so many and such eminent personalities even more beautiful, as though a seal was being placed from on high, from on as high as one could conceive, above all these fine observations and hopes regarding the future. The first circumstance revealed that the new hall was beginning its time – to use a common phrase – to count its years, from this Holy Year of the Redemption. And this was a good thing, a particularly good thing, because of the fact as well that the Divine Redeemer, who redeemed mankind with the sacrifice of all of himself, of his blood, of his life, even specifically in the act of

finishing the Redemption, has remained the Teacher. And when he sent his apostles to preach the Redemption to the world, to apply it, he sent them out with a teaching, a doctrinal, function, one could say almost a scientific function: *Euntes docete*.² This was what his beloved sons, the Academicians, did, added the Holy Father, and he knew that in the teaching of science as well they had that most noble sentiment and a true, very high, intention to engage in an apostolate. Another circumstance, which was equally beautiful and holy, indeed even more sweetly dear, was provided by the event of this Holy Christmas, to which they were now so near. This was a grateful and thankful remembrance, which under the guidance of an incomparable teacher and educator, the Church, calls the whole world in these days to the manger of Bethlehem, to that holy crib which, the Holy Father observed with so much consolation, was once again taking its place in our families, in our country, where so many people had already produced beautiful works of art and a language which spoke of such deep holy intimacy and holy accords, especially and above all on behalf of families.

In addition, the Holy Father thought once again of the holy crib, in response as well to the stimulus of the presence of those dear sons, because to the newly-born Redeemer were called the wise men, the kings, sovereigns and kings. And everybody knew how pious tradition saw in these most high worshippers of the humble newly-born Christ, people who were men of science, and in each of them saw *uno degli astri scrutator sovrani*.

This reference led the August Pontiff on to the subject, the starting thought, the subject of science, which also came to render homage to the newly-born Lord, who, small and forsaken as he was, was still and remained, as he was always to remain, the *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*.³ The Holy Father for this reason could not have had a more propitious and touching occasion to give, from the depths of his fatherly heart, to those who had gathered together, his most affectionate best wishes for the holy Christmas celebrations, which were so near, and for the New Year which was drawing nearer with them. With affectionate goodness he wanted to express all the good wishes that those beloved sons desired, and for everything and everybody that they carried in their hearts. And thus pronouncing his best wishes, he united them in a great blessing to which he added a prayer to the Lord to accompany that blessing with His own ineffable blessings, with all His favours.

1 *Sermo*, 69, 1, 1.

2 *Mt* 28:19. Cf. *Mk* 16:15 f.

3 Cf. for the phrase St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk. XVII, Ch. 4.