



Address on the Occasion of the 400th Anniversary of the Gregorian Calendar



His Holiness Joh Paul II received the participants at the Conference to Commemorate the 400th Anniversary of the Gregorian Calendar Reform. On that occasion the following address was delivered.

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for this visit which you make on the occasion of these days of study which are aimed at commemorating the 400th anniversary of the reform of the calendar that took place under my predecessor, Pope Gregory XIII. I realize that your work is sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Vatican Observatory, two institutions for which I have a very real affection since they form a valid link between the life of the Church and the world of scholarly research in the sciences and the history of science, a link which I deem to be of tremendous assistance both for the life of the Church and the cultural aspirations of mankind as a whole. As you know, I have emphasized many times that it is necessary for this relationship between faith and science to be constantly strengthened and for any past historical incidents which may be justly interpreted as being harmful to that relationship, to be reviewed by all parties as an opportunity for reform and for pursuing more harmonious communication. In brief, it must be the sincere desire of all to learn from history so as to gain insight into the positive direction that we must take together in the future.

2. In fact, from the topics which I note you are discussing these days it is clear that you desire

through your historical researches to help all of us understand better what has already taken place in such a fundamental area of human society as the establishment of a sound calendar. Your program indicates your recognition of the profound personal interest which the Church has had and continues to have concerning calendar revisions since such work influences the occurrence of religious feasts which constitute, as it were, the rhythm of the Church's daily life. Your examination of both the astronomical and sociological aspects of the calendar reform will surely help for a more harmonious understanding of what has happened and what remains to be accomplished in the area of calendar reform. In particular your examination of how the Gregorian Calendar was received by various societies and by various Churches will surely be of great help to all of us in these days when we sincerely seek a strengthening of that unity which Christ desired for his Church.

3. You are, I believe, fortunate to be able to pursue research in that area where we seek to blend the rhythms of human life in society with the fundamental rhythms of the universe in which we live. I say you are fortunate because you are given the opportunity to help others to recognize that unity between man and creation which testifies to the existence of the one Creator of us all.

It is a pleasure for me to share these brief thoughts with you. I assure you of the Church's appreciation for your efforts since she sees in this work the promotion of the common good for all persons. In a special bond of good will I join myself to you and to your loved ones. May Almighty God bless all of you with joy and happiness and may he grant to your endeavours every success.