



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
ON RECENT ADVANCES IN THE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT
OF VITREORETINAL DISORDERS**

*Castel Gandolfo
Friday, 15 September 1989*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to Castelgandolfo during the International Congress on *Recent Advances in the Research and Management of Vitreoretinal Disorders* which is being held under the auspices of the Schepens International Society. On many occasions in the past, my predecessors and I have met specialists in ophthalmology gathered in Rome for Congress. There is a fitting symbolism in this, since the Pope is the servant of the One who marked his saving mission in the world with many cures of the blind, as narrated in the Gospels. In speaking to another group three years ago, I mentioned how the Gospel of Saint John describes at length the cure of a man born blind because, in that instance, the physical healing was clearly associated with spiritual healing (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad eos qui conventui ophthalmicorum interfuerunt*, die 5 maii 1986: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 1, [1986] 1243 ss.). In the symbolism of sight, Christ unveils the mystery of our spiritual journey to salvation.

The eye is, as it were, the point of contact between the reality of the world and the interior reality of the human person, just as the intellect is the meeting point between science and faith. At this time you are assembled to study new methods of restoring the function of the eye, and in particular of the retina, with the aim of protecting it from the damaging effects of age and various pathological factors. You can speak proudly of positive advances which work for the good of the person and for the healing of the sick. Your work is one of noble and expert research.

Together with my best wishes for the success of your scientific endeavours, I would express the

hope that this kind of expertise can be *made more readily available to the poorest sectors of humanity* where blindness is most widespread. We are told that there are still some forty million victims of blindness in the world, and most of them are found in the underdeveloped nations. Unfortunately, the imbalances existing in the world are also evident in the sphere of science and medicine. The hope which I express is that science will join forces with faith and human solidarity in an effort to bring relief where it is most clearly needed. May we pray together for the day when the Lord “will wipe away every tear” from the eyes of suffering humanity (Cfr. *Apoc.* 21, 4). It is in the name of the Lord of Life that I manifest my esteem for your work and for the dignity of your mission. Upon all of you I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

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