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Message of the Holy Father for the conferral of the “Pontifical Academies 2023” Award to the Pontifical Academy Latinitatis

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father to the prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, His Eminence Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, on the occasion of the conferral of the “Pontifical Academies 2023” Award to the Pontifical Academy *Latinitatis*:

Message of the Holy Father

To my dear Brother Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça

Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education

I am pleased to address a message to you on the occasion of the Pontifical Academies Award. We honour the research, passion, and commitment of young scholars who have chosen to devote the intellectual endeavours and their love for knowledge to the interpretation of a linguistic and cultural heritage of inestimable value such as Latin. Today the Pontifical Academy *Latinitatis* will assign two important honours to equally demanding themes: *De rerum natura*, on Latin and the sciences, and *De re publica*, on Latin and politics.

I wish first of all to congratulate the winners, for their commitment to the Latin language and its relevance in the contemporary world, as shown by the research of Professor Enrico Piergiacomì, active in the Department of Humanities and Arts of the Israel Institute of Technology – *Technion* in Haifa, focused on the intersection between classical thought and modern sciences. In particular, the group of scholars collaborating on the national edition of Francesco Maurolico’s *Opera Mathematica* are carrying out the valuable task of valuing the great sixteenth-century scholar from Messina, who was not only a mathematician, but first and foremost a priest and a humanist.

Latin is a treasure trove of knowledge and thought, a key to the classical texts that forged our world. It

represents the roots of western civilization and, in many ways, our very identity. It is a language that embraces philosophy, science, art and politics, thus demonstrating its intrinsic value as a tool for reflection and dialogue, more necessary than ever in a world as fragmented as ours. In this regard, the prizewinners offer a fresh and contemporary view of how this ancient language can still speak to us and stimulate our reflection today. Their research not only investigates the thought of the great masters of the past, but integrates their knowledge in a modern context, bringing it closer to the challenges of our time. The entrants' work invites us to explore the nexus between scientific and political knowledge, under the aegis of a language with a history stretching back thousands of years.

The theme *De rerum natura* makes us think of the wonders of creation. At a time when we are increasingly aware of the fragility of the environment, reflection on the natural world becomes crucial. Science offers us tools to understand the laws of nature, to explore the mystery of life and to face ecological challenges. However, it is only through ethical, cultural and spiritual interpretation that we can truly grasp the deeper meaning of the cosmos that surrounds us and of which we are a part.

The vision of nature, in its entirety, as a gift of God, invites us to reflect on our responsibility towards the common home. There can and must be dialogue between science and faith: indeed, they are both called to guide our understanding of the world. In particular, the prize you have awarded reminds us that science cannot be reduced to a mere accumulation of data, but must help to grasp the complexity and the beauty of creation.

The theme *De re publica* urges us to explore the foundations and the structures of politics, reflecting on the common good and on justice. In times of social instability, the Latin tradition is a value, because it promotes a close link between "public affairs" and the fundamental principles of reflection. Politics, when exercised with honesty and integrity, is a noble art, a vocation to the service of the community, never private interest.

The proposal of an *ethos* rooted in humanistic values is therefore a call to responsibly action, in an atmosphere of dialogue, respect and inclusion. Politics must confront inequalities and promote the good of all, in particular the most vulnerable. Human and cultural formation plays an essential role here: only well-formed and aware citizens can be agents of healthy change in society.

Ultimately, reflecting on these two areas of study, *De rerum natura* and *De re publica*, we see how Latin provides fertile ground for exploration and synthesis between science, culture and politics. The painstaking and systematic research of the prize-winners is thus not only an academic contribution, but a real call addressed to each of us. For this reason, today's meeting is not merely a celebration of research, but an invitation to reaffirm our commitment to a culture of integral human growth (cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 40).

Let us ask ourselves, then: how can we translate the discoveries we are rewarding today into everyday life? How can we encourage the new generations to embark on paths of research, to question themselves and not be afraid to explore? How can we instill in young people a taste for culture and science?

The resourcefulness of thought and creativity, so dear to the Church, spring from the rediscovery of the beauty of a knowledge capable of forming hearts and minds, building bridges and breaking down walls. And in this regard, Latin, and with it the intellectual patrimony of humanity, can become tools for harmony among peoples, for the promotion of mutual respect and human dignity. I therefore hope that the prize awarded today may become a sign of hope and that the passion of the prizewinners inspire others to the same commitment. I thank them for their dedication and their work, as I also thank the members of the Pontifical Academy *Latinitatis* and all those present.

Most Reverend Eminence, expressing my joy at this initiative, I impart the Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to all the collaborators and members of the Pontifical Academies. May the Lord make your efforts and your work ever more fruitful

From the Vatican, 23 October 2024

