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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Professor Theodor W. Hänsch gets appointed Member of  
the Pontifical Academy of Sciences**

As has been announced by the Vatican Press Office on 21 June 2006, Prof. Theodor W. Hänsch, director at the Max Planck Institute of Quantum Optics, was appointed an Academician of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, by His Holiness Benedict XVI.

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences was founded in 1603 and – after a period of vicissitudes – radically reformed by Pope Pius XI in 1936. It is currently made up of 80 members named for life by the Pope. The academy is governed by a president, appointed from its members by the Pope, who is helped by a scientific Council and by the Chancellor. The current president is Nicola Cabibbo, Professor of Physics at Rome's La Sapienza University.

The Academy is an international and interdisciplinary body. It is subject to the direct authority of the Supreme Pontiff. As is stated in Article 2 of the Statutes, *“the aim of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences is to promote the progress of the mathematical, physical and natural sciences and the study of epistemological problems relating thereto.”* Pope John Paul II emphasized the role and goals of the Academy on 10 November 1979: *“... the existence of this Pontifical Academy of Sciences ..... is a visible sign.... of the profound harmony that can exist between the truths of science and the truths of faith”*. Article 5 of the Statutes says, that *“candidates for a seat in the Academy are chosen by the Academy on the basis of their eminent original scientific studies and of their acknowledged moral personality, without any ethnic or religious discrimination, and are nominated for life by sovereign act of the Holy Father.”*

Prof. Hänsch will receive the insignia during a Solemn Pontifical Audience at the next Plenary Session (3-6 November 2006).

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