

Scripps Atmospheric Scientist Appointed To Pontifical Academy Of Sciences

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Mario Aguilera

V. Ramanathan, an internationally renowned atmospheric scientist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego, has been appointed by Pope John Paul II to be an academician of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Ramanathan will receive the honor from the pope during the academy's Plenary Session in Rome the week of Nov. 5-8.

Ramanathan is director of the Scripps Center for Clouds, Chemistry, and Climate and professor of climate and atmospheric sciences. He also holds the Victor C. Alderson Chair of Applied Ocean Science. He has been affiliated with Scripps since 1990.

"Ramanathan's work is transforming our understanding of the climate change dilemma facing humankind," said Scripps Director Charles F. Kennel. "We must now be concerned with how the growing concentration of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere combines with the atmospheric brown cloud of air pollution that Ramanathan and his collaborators discovered. We now can see a direct relationship between pollution, climate change and human health. Climate change affects every human being on earth and all its living things. It is entirely fitting that the Pontifical Academy, with its global perspective, has honored Ramanathan."

Ramanathan's research focuses on global climate dynamics, aerosols, the greenhouse effect, clouds and satellite remote sensing. In 1975 he became the first to demonstrate that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are major greenhouse gases and significant contributors to global warming. He is currently co-chief scientist of Project Atmospheric Brown Cloud, a cooperative research project of the United Nations Environment Programme, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and participating member nations, to study the mixture of pollutants formed by fossil fuel combustion and rural biomass burning.

Ramanathan's previous honors include the 2002 Carl-Gustaf Rossby Research Medal from the American Meteorological Society, the Buys Ballot Medal from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, and a medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement from NASA. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a fellow of the American Meteorological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Geophysical Union.

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences was originally founded in 1603. Its current aim is to promote the progress of the mathematical, physical and natural sciences and the study of epistemological problems. Candidates for a seat in the academy are chosen, "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."

Academicians contribute to the activities of the academy by attending scientific meetings, including the academy's Plenary Sessions, proposing subjects for scientific meetings, nominating outstanding scientists for membership in the academy and nominating young scientists of international reputation for the Pius XI Medal.

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