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Jerome Lejeune

A Eulogy

by

His Holiness Pope John Paul II

To Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger
Archbishop of Paris, France

"I am the Resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn 11:25).

These words of Christ come to mind as we are confronted with the death of Professor Jerome Lejeune. If our Father in heaven called him from this earth on the very day of Christ's Resurrection, it is difficult not to see this coincidence as a sign. Christ's Resurrection is a great witness given to the Life which is stronger than death. Illumined by these words of the Lord, we see every human death as a participation in Christ's death and Resurrection, especially when a death occurs on the same day as the Resurrection. A death of this sort is an even more vivid witness to the Life to which man is called in Jesus Christ. Throughout his life our brother Jerome was inspired by this call. As a learned biologist he took up the cause of life. In his field he was one of the world's greatest authorities. Various institutions invited him to conferences and sought his advice. He was also respected by those who did not share his deepest convictions.

Today we would like to thank the Creator "from whom every family takes its name" (Eph 3:15) for the specific charism of the deceased. Here one must speak of a charism, because Professor Lejeune was always able to use his deep knowledge of life and its secrets for the true good of man and humanity, and for this alone. He became one of life's most zealous defenders, especially the life of the unborn, which is often threatened in our contemporary civilization, to the point that it could be considered a programmatic threat. Today this threat also extends to the elderly and the sick. Human institutions, democratically elected parliaments, usurp the right of determining who has the right to life, and inversely, who can be denied this right through no fault of his own. In various ways, our century has encountered such an attitude, especially during the Second

World War, and also after the end of the war. Professor Jerome Lejeune, who fully assumed the expert's particular responsibility, was prepared to become a "sign of contradiction", regardless of the pressures exerted by a permissive society or the ostracism to which he was subjected.

Today we mourn the death of a great 20th-century Christian, a man for whom the defense of life became an apostolate. It is clear that in the current world situation this form of lay apostolate is particularly necessary. Today we wish to thank God, the sole Author of life, for everything that Professor Lejeune was for us, and for all he did to defend and to promote the dignity of human life. I would like to thank him especially for having taken the initiative of establishing the Pontifical Academy for Life. A member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences for many years, Professor Lejeune did all the necessary preliminary work for this new foundation and became its first President. We are sure that he will henceforth pray to the Divine Wisdom for this important institution, which owes its existence largely to him.

Christ said: "I am the Resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live" We believe that these words were fulfilled in the life and death of our brother Jerome. May the truth about life also be a source of spiritual strength for the family of the deceased, for the Church in Paris, for the Church in France and for us all, to whom Professor Lejeune has left the truly remarkable witness of his life as a man and a Christian.

I am united in prayer with all those who are taking part in the funeral rites, and through the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to them all.

Vatican City, 4 April 1994.

— **Ioannes Paulus PP. II**
