



The Holy See

PIUS PP. XII

***LETTERA AL SIGNOR GIOVANNI M. HAYES,
PER IL CONGRESSO RURALE CATTOLICO DELL'IRLANDA****

We have learned with pleasure of the praiseworthy work being accomplished by the organization « Muintir na Tire » which your apostolic zeal prompted you to found seventeen years ago.

Every effort to put Christian social teaching into practice is deserving of commendation and encouragement, not merely because the children of light — as Our Predecessor of happy memory Pius XI pointed out (cfr. Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* ; Acta Apostolicae Sedis, Vol. XXII [1931], p. 227) — must not allow themselves to be surpassed in zeal by the children of darkness, but also because of the very real benefits that accrue to the community from the application of the Church's social doctrine.

The organization of which you are Chairman rightly looks upon the Parish as the basic unit of a Christian order, and We have noted with satisfaction that this is the subject chosen for discussion at your forthcoming Rural Week. In order to promote the practice of justice and charity in each one's own immediate surroundings, Muintir na Tire fosters a spirit of neighbourliness and of self-reliance, and it inspires individuals to devote themselves to the good of the community even at a cost of personal sacrifice.

When addressing a group of farmers some years ago, We Ourselves referred to the need for that friendly co-operation and « mutual help, not only in the circle of one's own family, but also between one family and another, between one home and another >> (Address to Italian Farmers, November 15, 1946); and We stressed the fact that the most important and most essential element of a genuine rural civilization is a true religious spirit (cfr. *ibidem*).

As pointed out by Our Predecessor of holy memory, Pius X, Whom We were recently privileged to proclaim a Saint, the restoration of all things in Christ entails « taking to heart the interests of the

people and especially of the working and agricultural classes, not only by instilling the principle of religion into the hearts of all,... but also by endeavouring to dry their tears, to sweeten their sorrows and to improve their economic conditions with well-ordered measures » (Encyclical Letter *Il fermo proposito*).

Faithful to that admonition, Muintir na Tíre sponsors projects of an economic, educational and recreational character. Apart from their other advantages, these help to make life in the country more interesting and more attractive, and in that way they serve to stem the present-day exodus of youth from rural areas towards towns and cities at home and abroad, with all the consequent spiritual and moral dangers.

On more than one occasion We have emphasized the exalted dignity and privilege of those who live and work on the land. We invoke the special blessings of Almighty God upon the work of Muintir na Tíre on behalf of the population of rural Ireland, and it is Our prayer that its meritorious efforts to achieve its noble ideals may be crowned with an ever increasing measure of success.

As an earnest of that divine favour and as a mark of Our paternal interest, We impart from Our heart to you, beloved Son, to the members of the National Executive of Muintir na Tíre, to those attending the Rural Week and to all who collaborate in the work of the organization, Our special Apostolic Benediction.

From the Vatican, July 14, 1954.

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