



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN XXIII
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**

29 December 1960

Gentlemen!

This pleasant meeting today reawakens in Our heart all the warm and kindly feelings that We experienced on the holy night of Christmas.

At that time, you were gathered together around the altar in the silence and the recollection that mark those hours of liturgical commemoration of the great Christian mystery.

Today your presence here has another meaning that We would like to underline : most of all, it is a way of showing clearly, here in the presence of the Pope, what cordial mutual understanding exists among the diplomats accredited to the Holy See.

We would like to add to Our greetings a solemn declaration of Our respect and love for each of the nations that you represent, for all those that border on their frontiers, for all the peoples of the earth, whatever the importance of their population.

As We see you all gathered together here, what memories rise up, what visions appear before Our mind's eye! But along with them, there is, as your distinguished spokesman has well pointed out, a note of anxiety in Our heart, at the thought of the problems concerning peace and harmony that are constantly stirring within each country and between peoples. What a long road still remains to be travelled in order to put true progress at the service of man everywhere – of man considered from the point of view of his spiritual as well as his material needs, taken as an individual, and not just as a member of the group!

The Church ardently longs for the priceless blessing of social and international peace: she is

working with all her might in her teaching, her exhortations, her activities, as you yourselves can testify. In this regard, We want to take advantage of the opportunity offered by your presence here before Us and give you some advance information on one point in Our program for the year that is about to begin. We plan to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of an event that had great historical importance: the publication in 1891 of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical «Rerum novarum», on the conditions of working-men. This document was considered so important by Our immediate predecessors, Pius XI and Pius XII, that they decided to celebrate its fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries respectively, the former in 1931 with the Encyclical «Quadragesimo Anno», the latter with a radio message to the whole world on the feast of Pentecost in the year 1941.

We are happy to have the very distinguished representatives of so many nations be the first to know of Our plans in this regard. We will celebrate the great encyclical of Pope Leo XIII in proper fashion by issuing a document that will add Our voice to those of Our great predecessors and will re-assert the Church's lasting concern with these matters – a concern that is now pointed not toward any particular aspect of the social order that is to be established, but toward its whole makeup, as the times in which we live seem to demand.

These times – We mentioned this just before – are not without their own uncertainties and causes for anxiety. And yet, here at the dawn of a new year, We would rather give Our attention to the things that encourage confidence and hope. And We will tell you here in the friendly atmosphere of this heart-to-heart talk that this is an old habit of Ours. When We were serving as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps at Paris, We used to draw up an account of the year just past on the first of January in the name of the diplomats of the seventy countries represented in the capital, and We always tried to find some glimmers of light that offered the hope of peace amid the restlessness of a disturbed world. You will, We are sure, permit your old colleague to go back over the last of these talks in particular, for some of its passages still seem quite up-to-date to Us today.

«As sentinels and devoted servants of peace in the world», We said on January 1, 1953, «we follow the daily political events in every country of the universe: some of them opening the way to a feeling of confidence in our hearts, others provoking fear. They invite us to reflect on them and find there a teaching that will free our spirits from anguish and help them to pave the way for better days». We went on to cite the thought-provoking motto of the city of Paris, *fluctuat nec mergitur*, and We invited those who were listening to join Us in lifting up their eyes «toward the star that shines over the tossing waves». And We finished up on a note of hope with these words: «Every nation has its own destiny in the hidden plans of Providence and each helps the others to realize it. As we preserve a firm faith, an unconquerable optimism, and a heart open to sincere expressions of human and Christian brotherhood, we all have a right not to be afraid of anything, and to have confidence in God's help».

These words expressed feelings that have only grown stronger in Us up to this day: We would like to offer them to you in closing, as an expression of the joyous expectation and the firm hope that

well up in all souls of good will on the threshold of a new year.

We add with all Our heart, in answer to the wishes so kindly presented in your name by your worthy spokesman, the Ambassador of Austria, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, all the wishes that We in Our turn form at this moment for yourselves, gentlemen, for your families, and for each and every one of the noble nations that you represent, so worthily here before Us. May God grant that the year about to begin will be for you and for your countries, a year of peace, of grace and of blessing.

**The Pope Speaks, vol.7 n°1 p.56-59.*
