



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII TO THE FIRST GREAT AMERICAN PILGRIMAGE IN THE POST-WAR*

Castel Gandolfo - Thursday, 1^o September 1948

We thank you for your hearty greeting. It is one more witness to the filial and never failing attachment of the Church in America to the See of Peter and to Christ's Vicar. We should like to show our own no less sincere and hearty welcome by greeting you individually one after the other; but with this vast throng you will surely excuse us and receive our few words as a message directed to each one personally.

We seem to see in this imposing gathering an epilogue, as it were, to the national, and more than national Congress of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine held almost two years ago with such encouraging success, under the inspiring leadership of Boston's zealous Archbishop and with the cordial and effective cooperation of his venerable brother Bishops, especially the most deserving Chairman of the Confraternity here present. We had the happy experience of addressing that Congress; and every word of praise we said then, every counsel and encouragement we gave to intensify and extend in an orderly way your magnificent apostolate, we now repeat. What pastor of souls, what true lover of Christ can contemplate with indifference the several million Catholic children being trained in schools from which all religious instruction is excluded? Will not each and every one feel the spur of holy zeal and Christian charity to provide for these unfortunate members of the growing generation the most important element of true education?

One resolution passed by the Congress of Boston was to direct a pilgrimage to the tomb of the venerated Pius X, whose encyclical on the teaching of catechism and whose personal devotion to this vitally important ministry over many years have given him every just claim to be looked up to as the ideal and inspiration of your Confraternity. With reverence and fervour you have knelt in prayer close to his hallowed remains, which but a few years ago we had transferred from the crypt of the Vatican basilica to the present resting place, so that the faithful approaching them more easily and more often might be drawn nearer to God. As you prayed, did his blessed memory

speaking no special word to your soul? Why was it that from the earliest days of his pontificate he pleaded in accents so earnest and anxious for an uninterrupted study and teaching of the catechism? It was because in that little book, with its questions and answers, which your children call their catechism, is contained eternal, divine truth; and Pius X loved truth as he loved Christ. Christ is Truth. The meek and humble Pontiff soon experienced that all too many there are in the world who shun nothing more carefully, dislike nothing more obstinately than the full, plain, unadulterated truth. There were many such in the Jerusalem of 2000 years ago, who wished to have God's teachings couched in terms more acceptable to their "modern mind" and its comfortable philosophy; but day after day in the temple, with supreme patience and exquisite, appealing charity towards all, Christ continued to preach the full truth of His Father's revelation to man.

Once addressing himself to his fellow-countrymen, who however were not of the Church, that incomparable patriot and illustrious prelate, your Cardinal Gibbons, in humble, kindly simplicity acknowledged that in the deepest recesses of his heart, he felt that, in possessing Catholic faith he held a treasure compared with which all things earthly are but dross. That faith, beloved children, through God's mercy is yours, — the same faith for which Peter was crucified in Rome and Paul beheaded along the Ostian Way, the faith for which mothers and maidens, stalwart youth and children and men hoary with age, gladly faced torture and death in imperial Rome's arenas, the faith that is God's unchanging, deathless truth. Love that faith, live it, radiate it; but you cannot, unless you know and understand its matchless beauty. And remember no sermon is so eloquent as an unblemished Catholic life.

That is Our first thought. A second thought is also suggested by your presence. Hearing of this large pilgrimage, come from across the seas to visit the shrines of Europe on their journey to the centre of Christendom, one might be tempted to conclude, that at long last a genuine and stable peace with its normal consequences had been restored to the world. That is not true. The tragic fact is that millions of human beings who were caught up in the maelstrom of a war which was declared finished more than three years ago, are still in this very Europe living in conditions that are inhuman; and war still rages in more than one other section of the world, while other millions must suffer under an unwanted tyranny. To describe these conditions, which weigh so heavily on Our paternal heart, is beside Our purpose here; but shortly, as you know, the Assembly of the United Nations will resume its sessions, duly authorized to grapple with problems of world peace and security. Men of learning and experience, of high character and lofty ideals, fully conscious of their momentous responsibility to civilization and culture, will put forth their best efforts to reinsure the family of nations, and, as We fondly hope, not only save it from an unimaginable cataclysm, but put it on the road that leads to joy in justice to all, working-men and employer alike, to morality in national and individual life that has found its only possible basis in religious faith in God. If ever an assembly of men, gathered at a critical cross-road in history, needed the help of prayer, it is this assembly of the United Nations.

Hence We ask you, venerable brothers, you, Our cherished sons in the sacred priesthood and you, Our beloved children in Christ Jesus, to pray. Let Our voice carry beyond you to all your fellow Catholics in America, yes to all Catholics in every country on the face of the earth. And We like to hope that you will be joined by all men of good will. During the coming days let there rise to the throne of God, the Father of Mercies, a pentecostal paean of praise and adoration. « We extol thee, O God, and we bless thy name for ever. Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations » (*Ps.* 144, 1, 13). « All things are in thy power and there is none that can resist thy will » (*Esther* 13, 9). Thou art, O God, of all things the Author and Maker, their Exemplar, their Measure and their End. And then following this act of faith, with humble and contrite heart let men make their own the prayer of Daniel : « We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and have revolted; and we have gone aside from thy commandments and thy judgments. The Lord our God is just in all His works which He has done: for we have not hearkened to His voice » (*Dan.* 9, 5, 14). Then haply God, infinitely wise and infinitely good, moved by the chastened faith and repentance of His creatures will incline His ear, will look upon their desolation and come to their assistance. Surely He has proved His love for men, when He sent His only-begotten Son into the world, so that they might have life through Him (*1 Io.* 4, 9).

We conclude, beloved children, with the repeated expression of Our immense gratitude for the charity you have shown to the war-stricken countries of the world, and for the magnificent generosity with which your devoted Hierarchy enables Christ's Vicar to answer the heart rending appeals that came and still come incessantly to His desk from the families, towns and whole provinces that must struggle with decreasing strength and often waning hope to eke out their existence until better days dawn. God will reward you, each and every one of those whose smallest contribution made the total possible. Receive as a token of Our sincere thanks the Apostolic Benediction, which with all the affection of a father's heart We impart to you, to all your dear ones at home, to all those whom you wish now to have remembered.

**Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII, X,*
 Decimo anno di Pontificato, 2 marzo 1948 - 1° marzo 1949, pp. 175 -178
 Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana