



The Holy See

**WORDS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE «AMERICAN LEGION»***

Thursday, 2 October 1947

The best wish, the most sincere and generous We can offer you, gentlemen, is that your Legion may never increase by recruits from another war.

There is a grim bond uniting your members forged in the unspeakable horrors of war, strengthened and purified by memories of heroism, unselfishness, affection and devotion. But with wars over, another bond yet it is not altogether another —holds you united, and your patriotism now in the fields of peace is no less active for the defence of your country. You have power for great good. Use it well. Help your youth; help them to grow up responsible citizens with a salutary fear of God in their hearts; in their minds and conduct reverence for law, morality and religion. Help them to grasp and acknowledge the truth that any life worthy of their manhood and their high destiny calls for and deserves toil and self-discipline. God grant that their world of tomorrow may be one of more universal social justice and more stable international peace.

With paternal affection We pray God's blessings on you and on all those who are near and dear to you.

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Your spirit does not seem belligerent, but your name is. In ancient Rome the legionaries were regarded as the best and most trustworthy soldiers, most truly Roman. But they were legioned for one vast level plain of Mars; you are veterans of such fields of battle, never to return to them, We hope, and now are organized as a force for peace.

Your devotion to your country has been written once on the imperishable pages of the history of two terrible wars. Remember, the pages that tell the history of peace are no less honourable, and the Legion, We are sure, will write its devotion to country on those pages with no less glory. The

Bill of Rights for which men died may be lost later in bloodless battle. In union there is strength, it is true, and strength is a great asset, provided it be expended for a good and worthy purpose. It can be manoeuvred and diverted into a channel that leads to no good, neither its own good nor the good of the country that has created it. Such is the weakness of all human organizations.

Our best wishes, then, follow the American Legion. God grant that its members, as they were her glory in war, may be their country's bulwark and honour in peace. We pray God's blessings on you and on all who are near and dear to you.

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