



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII TO THE CHILDREN OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OF THE UNITED STATES*

Wednesay, 2 March 1949

Dear children, God has been very good, has He not, to give Us the great happiness of paying you once more a Lenten radio-visit in your schools across the sea?

He is the first to know, of course, as We are sure you know, for having heard it so many times from the lips of your loved ones-your parents, teachers, priests and Bishops-that you are always close to the Holy Father's heart: your work and your play, your smiles and your tears, your books and bells and examinations; your Communion with the King around His altar, and at home where He follows to bless your growing years with His grace and Divine protection.

How indeed could the Vicar of Christ forget, or let others forget, even for a day, the dear Lord's hopes and fears for His little ones? The thought of you, the love of you is ever with Us as We work and pray that God's Kingdom may come on earth, for home and Church and country, as it is in Heaven. Not just for to-day, but every day, the Pope is reminded, by all he sees and hears and suffers, through all the joys and sorrows he shares with his big world-family, that the future of that blessed. Kingdom of Christ, with its promise of justice, love and peace, lies after all with you. The grown-ups, as He told us long ago, may only hope to build it and enjoy it when their hearts and hands become again as those of little ones.

But if Our radio-greeting comes to you today, from Peter's home in Rome, with an extra note of nearness and endearment, it is because the Holy Father has good reason to remember that the hearts and hands of His American boys and girls, thanks to their Catholic schooling, are open wider during the holy season of Lent to the year-in, year-out invitation of our Teacher, our Lord and our Life: « Learn of Me! Follow Me! Remain in My love! ». And what better moment could you choose to show your brothers and sisters all over the world that you belong to Our Lord, now and forever, all that you are and all that you have received from Him?

The ashes Mother Church placed on your brow as Lent began were one more sign, for all who have eyes to see, of your need of Him. The purple she drapes on her statues and Cross during the time of the Passion, when we join our little sacrifice to His big one, to share His Easter victory, is one more sign of His strange, sweet need of you. You need Him now. He needs you now. He is our daily Lesson. He is our daily Companion. He is—O wonder of wonders!—our daily Bread. He is with us all days, even to the end of time, so that none of us may ever be able to say that we haven't the strength or the light or the courage to follow wherever He leads, to love what He loves and hate only what He hates, to be good and do good for the world He asks us to help Him make one holy family at last.

What comfort it brings to Him now, and to His Body which is the Church, in face of the World's stubbornness and strife and sin, to notice that you, His little ones, are not living and studying, planning and praying through your years at school just for yourselves alone, but for all His far-flung family, with tenderness and pity like His own for those in poverty and pain?

As We were so proud and happy to tell you last year at this time, dear children, there are many hundreds of your little friends, in almost every country named in your geography, who live to thank and bless you, before the same altar and Cross of Christ, for remembering their need of Him and His need of them. Faithfully first in your Lenten prayers; and then in the steady little stream of your Lenten gifts: food and clothes, games and toys, medicine and school-supplies, with the other simple good things the Lord meant each of them to have, as every Christian knows.

We know how much your hearts and hands have done to bring them back to better health and happier homes, after the long nightmare of war and ruin. For they have told Us so, in the language of gratitude and forgiveness they speak so much better, it sometimes seems, than older folks. We have read their letters. We have seen their pictures. We have held them in our arms and blessed them in the Name of the God of love, as We bless you now, their Christian friends indeed, their Christian friends indeed. Some of them will never see or walk again in this world. And others will never know, as He has given you to know, the welcome of a mother's kiss or a father's quiet smile when they come home from school. But you have helped them to see, and helped Us to remind them, that they are all the dearer to the Heart of Jesus and Mother Mary for having lost so soon these joys of earth, and borne so patiently for Him and her these cruel bodily pains. What you have given them is a Lenten treasure beyond all price: a share in your loyal friend-ship for the King Who by his holy Cross continues to redeem the world.

During this Lent, as you have heard already at home and in Church and at school, Mother Church is preparing her little ones everywhere to take their part in the great living pageant of prayer and penance she calls her Holy Year. She prays with you and for you that 1950 may really be for all men « the year of the great Return and of the great Pardon ». But while she prays, many of her sick and homeless little ones are, crying still. They, too, are your brothers and sisters, every one of them. In the Holy Land, where the Christ-Child first made His home with us, and invited all children

to come unto Him. In tormented, weary China. In noble Greece. In the crowded camps and emigrant boats. Still they cry for pity from your open hearts and hands! But again, much of Our fatherly joy in greeting you over the radio-waves to-day comes from being sure that you will hear and be kind to these other delicate lambs of the Good Shepherd's flock, as He has prompted you to be kind so often to so many in Lenten days gone by.

May your country and your homes, your class-rooms and your play-grounds be brighter with His light and grace as the Holy Year dawns on our wayward world, with its message of mercy to those who show mercy, and of peace in Our Lord to all little children of good will! That is the Holy Father's loving hope for you, generous sons and daughters of our dear America.

Whispering this and many another Holy Year hope to the motherly ear of Our Lady Immaculate, your country's Patroness in Heaven, We give you now, for a best goodbye to you and all your loved ones, young and old, fondly from Our heart the Papal Blessing.

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