



The Holy See

*DISCORSO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII AGLI AGENTI DI VIAGGIO E TURISMO**

Castel Gandolfo - Giovedì, 29 ottobre 1953

The business mission which has brought you to Rome, Gentlemen, — even apart from the pleasure of this very welcome visit — could not but engage Our sympathetic attention and interest.

Though Our direct contacts with your esteemed confraternity during recent years have been quite understandably few, We still treasure the memory of many an earlier courteous service rendered. And these ever broader and steadier streams of pilgrims, professionals and tourists of every walk in life, converging on Our lovely Italy and the Eternal City at its heart, keep Us constantly mindful of the good offices you are in a position to contribute to the satisfaction and profit of so many of Our beloved children near and far.

Plainly for all to see, the travel agent's trade has its own place of honour among the prodigious social developments of our times. In the bare hundred years since Thomas Cook first publicly advertised his original « excursion train » — and more particularly during the last half-century of constant world movement, commotion and exchange — you have succeeded in bringing the techniques of ocean and continental travel to rare perfection and precision. What a relentless struggle against a whole sea of troubles, man-made and otherwise, that has meant! What alertness to the human needs — not seldom to the human caprices — of individuals, family groups and even masses on the move! The transport, lodging, guidance, entertainment and repose of literally millions of travellers at home and abroad could never have become the relatively smooth and efficient social service we marvel at today, were it not for your vigilant, stubborn, painstaking effort of coordination and control.

But the techniques of tickets, passports, timetables and interpreters aside, may We not dare to speak of *your* business, too, in terms of dedication, vocation and apostleship? Has not the time come to give it the nobler name of a *profession*? Why not, indeed? The dramatic « movement » in

which you are playing your modest, yet all but indispensable part, involves far more than a complex series of commercial transactions. It neither begins nor ends with the buying and selling of economic goods and services, however competently organized. Your skills and your counsel, no less completely than those, say, of the doctor or lawyer, are mobilized and placed at the service of human beings, children of God and heirs of Heaven like yourselves, for whom travel of one sort or another has assumed the proportions of a quest for personal fulfillment.

The divinely implanted urge to share their joys and sorrows with their fellow-men of different climes and cultures, the yearning to enjoy together the grandeur and the beauty of a common human heritage, be it of Nature or art, of science or religion, — surely that is reason abundant for treating as *clients*, rather than as mere customers, those who make use of the travel agent's « facilities »? There is so much that does not meet the eye in even the briefest of their sight-seeing trips! And how reassuring it is to realize that so many have formed the habit of vesting their vacations with a purpose more humane than simple respite or distraction from the year-in, year-out business of making a living!

No, it will not do to set your sights too low. In each of the travellers confided ever so momentarily to your care and protection there breathes the restless human spirit of Saint Augustine's immortal phrase; the soul of the pilgrim and wanderer here below, seeking knowingly or not, because he needs it, the comfort and strength of communion in faith, hope and love with his brother-exiles in this valley of tears. Of each of these charges of yours, and not only of Homer's famous hero, the poet-laureate of England sings:

*I am become a name; - For always roaming with a hungry heart - Much have I seen and known;
cities of men - And manners, climates, councils, governments, - Myself not least, but honour'd of
them all; - I am a part of all that I have met; - Yet all experience is an arch, where thro'
that untrayelled world, whose margin fades - Forever and forever when I move.*

(Alfred Lord Tennyson, Ulysses)

To this meeting of men's minds and hearts, Gentlemen, to this most worthy journey's end, your professional lives and labours are committed. We need not, then, remind you, We trust, that the precious human cargo, whose interests you serve, represents a serious responsibility before that moral law, at once divine and human, which must guide, as it limits, the conduct of the traveller and his agent alike.

The comfort and convenience of the voyage will be naturally one of your chief preoccupations, unless the wayfarer has renounced both in the spirit of the pilgrim or penitent. But let them be provided in discreet and reasonable measure. Let there be no conniving with those — happily an exceptional few — who permit themselves abroad, what conscience would reproach them for at home, the wanton display of luxurious and dissipated living. International understanding and amity

have less than nothing to gain from such « vacation » trips, which cannot fail to scandalize the tourist's toiling and less affluent brethren in the country whose hospitality is thus abused.

Likewise the enjoyment and legitimate recreation of your patrons on tour must form one of your major concerns. But could we call it less than treason to your high calling, were you to lend the least encouragement to those who would exploit the stranger in their midst in guise of entertaining him? Obviously, the profit motive has its proper, if subordinate, dignity and function also in the field of travel accommodations: at every stage of the journey the labourer or servant is worthy of his hire (cfr. *Luc.* 10, 7). And no one would be so rash as to suggest the stemming of that tide of « invisible exports » which has come to mean so much in revenue to harassed national trades and treasuries. But what avowable social purpose could possibly be served by trading on the traveller's ignorance of local customs and values, by catering to his baser tastes and instincts, by using his separation from home and dear ones as an excuse for wilfully exposing him to occasions of sin?

Here, of course, as in so much of the planning of his tour, your personal responsibility is divided with the host country or organization. But the weight of your numbers and experience, above all the contagion of your scrupulous adherence to an exalted ideal of human fellowship, can do much to raise the moral standards of your service to a level that is recognizably Christian, and to keep them there.

To that noble end, as many a sorry experience shows, the pressure of numbers alone, without unity of moral conviction and purpose, will prove of little avail. As your organization grows to the dimensions of a major social force — and We are delighted to note that international travel has become a serious community concern for the seventy nations represented here before Us — We feel that you will have already sensed the need, along with other service-groups similar to your own, for agreement on some form or other of a Code of Fair Practice, wherein not only your professional rights and prerogatives, but also and especially your commitment to the demands of Christian ethical norms, would be resolutely set forth, confirmed and sanctioned. That would indeed be a happy development, and one rich in promise for the cause of spiritual unity in a world where travellers, their agents and their hosts were meant to live in fraternal peace.

Now that your Conference has ended, that brightening human horizon beckons you on from Eternal Rome. May the blessing of Almighty God, which We cordially invoke for your Association, your families and friends, gladden your voyage home and make ever more fruitful your labour for the legion of His travellers you are called to serve as He would have them served.

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