



The Holy See

***RADIOMESSAGGIO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII
PER LE RICORRENZE CENTENARIE AD ERNAKULAM
NEL MALABAR IN ONORE DI S. TOMMASO
APOSTOLO E DI SAN FRANCESCO SAVERIO****

Sala di San Giovanni - Giovedì, 31 dicembre 1952

From a heart filled with joy and deep fatherly interest We send you Our greeting, beloved sons and daughters, as you convene in Ernakulam to celebrate the centenaries of the holy Apostle Thomas and St. Francis Xavier, heroes both, who brought to India the glad gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Malabar and all South India are present in impressive numbers, as well as other sections of your country. Gathered around Our Legate and your Bishops Our Venerable Brothers, in this solemn hour you lift up your hearts and hands to the Father of mercies and God of all consolation (2 Cor. I. 3) to render thanks to Him for the priceless gift of faith which you received through those God-sent missionaries.

Not without reason are you proud of the fact that the Lord assigned to you that Apostle who was to place his finger in the wounds of the sacred hands and his hand in the side of Jesus, so that he might bring you the divine truth about God and the redemption and with it the whole treasury of His immeasurable love and grace.

Nineteen hundred years have passed since the Apostle came to India and in word and deed and utter self-sacrifice bore witness to Christ in your land. Mighty was the power of God working in him. During the centuries that India was cut off from the West and despite many trying vicissitudes, the Christian communities formed by the Apostle conserved intact the legacy he left them, and as soon as the sea-passage — at the close of the 15th century — offered a link with their fellow Christians of the West, their union with them was spontaneous.

This Apostolic lineage, beloved sons and daughters, is the proud privilege of many among you who glory in the name of St. Thomas Christians, and We are happy on this occasion to acknowledge and bear witness to it. It is Our hope that their vigorous activity, fruitful in so many good works, and their apostolic spirit, to which Catholic India is indebted for so many ministers of Christ's Kingdom and consecrated virgins, may continue to characterize you and advance the growth of religious life.

This month marks also the 400th year since Francis Xavier closed his life and apostolate alone on the island of Sancian. It was at the very moment when he was preparing to push on to the imperial court of China in the very heart of the East-Asiatic world. He was only 46 years old and his work in Asia had lasted only 10 years; but it covered the vast region from India's West Coast across Indonesia to Japan; and here in this immense field Francis showed his true greatness. He was great in his far-flung plans of spiritual conquest; he was great in his day by day activity; so great that you rightly call him your second Apostle, and the highest authority of the Church has declared him to be the patron of the whole East and then patron of all Missions, a saint, a wonder-worker, revered not only by his fellow-Catholics, but by Hindus too and Moslems and Buddhists.

Yours was the good fortune to have had Francis Xavier sow the seed of the gospel and foster its early growth over the years right in the southern section of your country. From that planting, watered and enriched by his prayers and sacrifices, sprang the work of the Missions, namely the growth of the Catholic Church in India during the last 400 years.

We do not know if the Catholics of India ever commemorated their two Apostles with such splendour and, what is more important, with hearts so well prepared for the message of God and Jesus Christ as you have done during these days. But this We believe We can say, that no such celebration ever took place at a moment of such consequence for you and your country.

These recent years have seen India enter upon a new era of her history. In laying the foundations of the nascent state she must count on the cooperation of all the sound and competent elements among her people, and she has a right to that cooperation. The powers of good and evil are contending in bitter conflict for the soul of Asia, and you know what hangs on the outcome of that conflict. You realize too the important, dominant and uncompromising role to be played in this conflict and in the upbuilding of the State by Religion, by the true Faith.

At such an hour We call on you: first, to close ranks and stand together! There may be among you differences of rite and other outward practices and manner of living; but you all profess the same faith, you are all brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, all children of the same mother, His Church. Be you rich or poor, of high or low station — you are all equally members of the great Catholic family and through grace dwelling in your soul are already citizens of heaven (cfr. *Phil.* 3. 20). In this union and concord is your strength.

If you should give assistance wherever there is need, this obligation holds especially where there is question of those « who are of one family with us in the faith » (*Gal.* 6. 10), and it holds above all, when the Church herself appeals to your help for those important undertakings without which she cannot accomplish her task of opening the way for the grace of the true faith and the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. In reminding you of this, We are happy at the same time to praise the zeal with which you have thus far fulfilled this obligation.

Let there be a holy rivalry among you in showing each other respect and reverence (cfr. *Rom.* 12. o), and in giving your Bishops that trusting obedience due to those whom the Holy Spirit has appointed to watch over your souls, knowing they will have an account to render (cfr. *Hebr.* 13. 17).

Today when the powers of evil fight in serried ranks and the need for concord among those who are on the side of God is more imperious, We make bold to call on even the separated brethren : Let the division cease; to you the house is open which the Lord in unmistakable words (*Matt.* 16, 16-20) built on the rock of Peter and his successors.

May the burning appeal, the high-priestly prayer of Jesus Christ find whole-hearted response from you all: « Holy Father, keep them true to thy name whom Thou hast given to me, that they may be one, as We are one » (*Jo.* 17, 11).

Secondly, it is hardly necessary for Us to remind you, that the Catholic Church demands of no one to give up one's native ways and customs, forces no one to adopt foreign ways of living. The Church belongs to the East as well as the West. She is bounden to no particular culture, she is at home with all who respect the commands of God. What is consonant with man's God-given nature, is good and simply human, the Church permits, furthers, ennobles and sanctifies. This once made clear, beloved sons and daughters, it is for you to be conscious of your duty to your country and people.

Be an army of prayers. Storm heaven with your supplications fortified by your self-sacrifice, until God pours out His mercy and grace on your cherished land.

Be witness to Jesus Christ. Make it clear, that whatever may be true and good in other religions, finds its deeper meaning and perfect complement in Christ; while the Catholic faith reveals a knowledge of divine truth and a power to save, to sanctify and to unite man with God, which make it infinitely superior.

Uphold the word of truth by your example. So live, that your conduct will be a strong argument drawing men to the true faith in Jesus Christ. That is the sublime apostolate to which you all are called.

Thus a powerful phalanx will be formed from your ranks against the destructive elements of godlessness. Against them you are in a position to offer to your people and your government the social teaching of the Church. It is based on social justice, on the duty of each to the community, and of the community to each; its goal is peace in the social order, a composing of conflicting interests, so that the humblest in a nation may have at least what is sufficient; its strength is in its uncompromising reverence for the honour and natural rights of every human being.

The people of India should rejoice in the religious spirit rooted in their soul. Through the powerful intercession of Mary, the Blessed Virgin, and your fathers in the faith, the Apostle Thomas and St. Francis Xavier, and through your own courageous profession of the faith in word and deed, may your people in their search for God come to understand the meaning of the high-priestly prayer of our Lord; « Eternal life is knowing Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent (Jo. 17, 3).

As a pledge of eternal life and heaven's richest graces, with all the affection of Our heart We impart to Our most worthy Legate, to your Bishops and priests, to all who labour with you for the salvation of souls, to your apostolic works, your families, your youth and the entire nation the Apostolic Benediction.

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