



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS PP. XII
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE****

Sunday, 4 March 1956

Mr. Ambassador :

The distinguished and cordial words with which Your Excellency has expressed the sentiments of his illustrious colleagues are a tribute We prize most highly. They emphasize once again the respectful deference which the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See has on many occasions shown towards Our humble person. We welcome with pleasure this opportunity of expressing Our gratitude.

It has pleased you, Mr. Ambassador, to recall Our efforts on behalf of peace. Peace is, in fact, one of Our most constant preoccupations. From the day after Our election to the heavy burdens of the Sovereign Papacy, when We delivered a radio address to the entire world, until the present time, We have unceasingly prayed to heaven and used all the means at Our disposal to urge men of all opinions and nationalities to seek sincerely those spiritual values for which individuals and peoples yearn.

Peace! Who can estimate its worth and benefits? Would that We could arouse a more fervent desire for it throughout the world, so that individuals and groups would henceforth consent to make the greatest and most personal sacrifices in order to protect, preserve and strengthen it. How We wish men and nations would prefer it to the satisfactions of egotism and selfishness. How We hope that the pressure of world opinion will curb resistance and foolish stubbornness, make it necessary everywhere to settle even the sharpest disputes amicably and force the acceptance of arbitration and compromise, through which many irreparable evils can be avoided.

We often hear the present age characterized – not without a trace of complacency – as the era of the «second technical revolution». In spite of the prospect of a better future which this

characterization seems to imply, it is necessary to emphasize the permanency of suffering and of political and economic insecurity among the most fortunate peoples as well as in underdeveloped areas.

The bitter experiences of the past century should be enough to explain this. Were not promises of a technically and economically perfect world made then as they are now? Did they not lead to cruel disillusion? The social upheavals brought about by the application of science in a spirit that was too often materialistic ruined the existing order without replacing it with a better or stronger one.

The Church, on the other hand, has never lost sight of man's real needs and has dedicated herself to the mission of preserving the true stability of his existence. She knows that man's temporal destiny finds its sanction and fulfillment only in eternity. Without in any way denying the achievements of science and technology, she keeps them in their proper place and gives them their true meaning. They must serve man without upsetting the balance of all the relationships which make up the plan of his life – family, property, profession, community and state.

To base the security and stability of human life only on an increasing quantity of material goods is to forget that man is primarily a spirit created in God's image. He is a being responsible for his actions and his destiny and capable of ruling himself. He finds in these facts his highest dignity. It is right to defend this freedom against outside restraints, against the threat of social systems which paralyze it and make it illusory.

But the very person who wages this battle must realize that economics and technology are useful and even necessary forces so long as they are subservient to higher spiritual needs. They become harmful and dangerous only when they are given undue predominance and the dignity, so to speak, of ends in themselves. It is the task of the Church to assure respect for this system of values and to subordinate the elements of material progress to truly spiritual goals.

Governments which follow a policy inspired by these principles will maintain an internal strength against which militant materialism will shatter itself. Materialism will strive in vain to dazzle these governments with the lure of a false peace. The road to such a peace, it will be claimed, lies in the establishment of economic relations or the exchange of technical experiences. May the peoples who set out on this road go forth with prudence and a reserve inspired by a keen desire to safeguard spiritual values. May they always remember that they are being guided in a direction that does not and cannot lead by itself to true peace.

Slogans like «national unity» and «social progress» should not deceive us. For militant materialism, «peacetime» means only a truce, a precarious truce during which it awaits the social and economic collapse of other peoples.

That is why We are appealing to all who want peace and unity for mankind. With the help of God, such generous souls are becoming more numerous every day. They victoriously oppose their ideal of light and love to error and evil. Convinced that nothing solid can be built on sand, they rely on eternal truths that cannot be shaken by even the most categorical denials. For what human reason has long groped for, God in His goodness has shown to men in the person of His beloved Son. «For He Himself is our peace». (*Eph. 2, 14*)

In His name and on behalf of peace for all humanity, We thank you again, gentlemen, for the tribute you have just paid Us. We ask the most abundant divine favors for you and the countries you represent and give you Our Apostolic Blessing.

**The Pope speaks*, vol.3 n°1, p.79-81.