



The Holy See

IL SODALIZIO DI SANTA SUSANNA IN ROMA Un numeroso gruppo di Dame del Sodalizio di Santa Susanna, guidato dal Rev.do Padre Giacomo Cunningham, Procuratore Generale della Società dei Sacerdoti Missionari di San Paolo Apostolo (Paulist Fathers), è ammesso in Udienza, giovedì 22 maggio 1958. L'Associazione raccoglie volenterose e attive Signore della colonia Americana nell'Urbe, le quali svolgono spirituale attività di formazione e cultura religiosa presso la chiesa dei fedeli degli Stati Uniti in Roma, intitolata appunto a Santa Susanna.

So this is the Ladies' Guild of Santa Susanna,—each it would seem, with a small family guild of her own. You have come carrying a golden sheaf of good works, of charity for the needy and zeal for the beauty of God's house, under the leadership of your revered pastor. With admirable restraint and consideration you have refrained up till now from asking to be received by Us in special audience, and that increases the joy with which We welcome you this morning. The fame of your apostolate has run ahead of you, and for Us, We wish you to know, it is always a deep consolation to learn that here in Our own diocese the laity are eager and generous to collaborate with the shepherds of their souls.

Last year, on a somewhat more solemn occasion, We declared that « it would be a misunderstanding of the real nature of the Church and her social character to distinguish in her a purely active element, the ecclesiastical authorities, and a purely passive element, the laity. All the members of the Church... are called upon to cooperate in building and perfecting the Mystical Body of Christ» (Acta Ap. Sedis a. 49, 1957, p. 925-926). Yes, Christ's call to personal sanctity and to an apostolate for the spread of His kingdom on earth reaches also to you, beloved sons and daughters. It was to the laity that St. Peter wrote: « Enshrine Christ as Lord in your hearts; and if anyone asks you to give an account of the hope which you cherish, be ready at all times to answer for it, but courteously and with due reverence, sure that your own conscience is clear » (1 Petr. 3, 15). And again : « your life amidst the Gentiles (today one might say non-Catholics) must be beyond reproach; so that, if they speak against you as evil-doers, they may from your honourable behaviour come to understand you and give glory to God in the day of visitation » (ibid. 2, 12).

In that lesson given by St. Peter you see described the first step in your apostolate. It is to understand your faith and then by your conduct make clear what its teachings should mean every

loyal member of the Church. And you might be surpr to learn how effectively the priestly ministry is facilitated by unflinching Catholic living of his parishioners. A second step be pointed out by your grateful love for the divine Redeemer Who has given you the priceless gift of faith. It will stir

embers of your zeal to a burning desire to brighten the lives of those in sorrow and distress, until their courage is restored they begin to feel again the gentle hand of their Saviour outstretched to lead them out of the darksome ways of this world's trials and sufferings into the light of Easter's joy and hope.

We are still in the paschal season, and it makes your presence remind us of those pious women in Jerusalem, who were first to run to the tomb to render homage of their devout reverence and affection to the Body of Christ. The purpose your Guild is to serve the same Christ now living in His Mystical Body, which is the Church. Let His undying love for you bring out the best that is in you of unselfish devotion to His supreme cause, to bring men to God, to bring God to men, so that united in Christ Jesus all may live in charity and peace and joy. With grateful affection We impart Our Apostolic Benediction to your beloved pastor and to you, dear sons and daughters here present. May it descend likewise on all members of Ladies' Guild and on those whom they hold dear, as a token of Our paternal feelings and a pledge of the special grace, that the love and strength of Christ the Lord may pervade and sanctify all your apostolate.

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