



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN XXIII TO THE REGENTS OF SAN MARINO**

May 18, 1959

We are happy to extend Our welcome to you, gentlemen, Regents of San Marino. We are thus given an opportunity – and a very welcome one to express Our sentiments of benevolence toward your ancient and glorious republic, which is beloved of this Apostolic See for many reasons.

The head of Christianity cannot fail to observe that your republic feels with great intensity the spiritual ties which, from the time of her origins to this day, bind her to the name of a saint, while her religious and civic traditions can be traced back to the influence of that saint's spirit, together with the special gifts of industriousness, of wisdom, and of courteous hospitality (the latter was put to a severe test during the last war): a heritage of which you can justly be proud.

We would also like to remark, with satisfaction, upon the fact that your republic not only is a great attraction for tourists from different countries because of her ancient monuments, her lovely landscapes, and her artistic beauties, but also has earned – despite the modest size of her geographic expanse – the respect and esteem of everyone because of her ideal of freedom with justice, which can be observed in action within her boundaries.

The love for freedom in which you were brought up and educated can boast of exquisitely Christian roots among you. Your fathers captured the true meaning of freedom when they taught you never to separate its name From the name of God, who is its irreplaceable foundation. True freedom is a gift of God, and can truly blossom and prosper only where the spirit of God dwells: «ubi Spiritus Dei, ibi libertas» [where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom] (2 *Cor.* 3, 17). Along with this, your fathers taught you how to protect this precious gift from being lightly abandoned, and your fathers also showed you the way to secure the desirable fruits of Freedom such as peace, harmony, and a respect for those spiritual values on which depend human well-being and the permanency of public institutions.

We like to recall this lesson taught by your history, because the word "freedom" is uttered by men perhaps more often than any other word while its true essence eludes the grasp of the majority. The reason for this is easily discovered. Men have believed that they had freedom securely in their possession and have placed it under an armed guard; They also have placed in the safekeeping of the law and of human conventions, and have neglected to build it on the unbreakable rock of faith in God. However, if we put God to one side, we find that, without God, freedom is merely a word written on water. Without God's help, no house can be solidly built, nor is there any city that can rely for its defence only on the vigilance of men (cf. *Ps.* 126, 1).

At this time, the best wish We can extend to Our dear people of San Marino is that they may be faithful to their noble traditions, and that the genuine spirit of Christianity may inspire the country's public institutions more and more. Your glory is freedom: but it must be the freedom of children of God, which will bind you into one large family, where peace and harmony reign, sheltered from the violent shake-ups which plague much bigger nations, and where all may see a convincing example of well-being firmly based on the eternal principles of the Gospel.

With this wish, We pray God to bestow upon you, gentlemen Regents, and upon your people, the bounty of His divine assistance, secured through the intercession of your Patron Saint, as a pledge of which We impart to you, with affection, the Apostolic blessing.

* *The Pope Speaks*, vol.6, n°1, p.86-87.