



The Holy See

***CHIROGRAFO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO XII
ALL'ECC.MO HARRY S. TRUMAN
PRESIDENTE DEGLI STATI UNITI D'AMERICA****

Your Excellency :

We have just received from the hands of your personal representative, Mr. Myron Taylor, Your Excellency's letter of August 6, and We hasten to express Our satisfaction and thanks for this latest testimony to the desire and determination of a great and free people to dedicate themselves, with their characteristic confidence and generosity, to the noble task of strengthening the foundations of that peace for which all peoples of the earth are longing. As their chosen leader Your Excellency seeks to enlist and cement the cooperation of every force and power which can help to accomplish this task. No one more than We will hope for its success and for the happy achievement of the goal We pledge Our resources and earnestly beg God's assistance.

What is proposed is to ensure the foundations of a lasting peace among nations. It were indeed futile to promise long life to any building erected on shifting sands or a cracked and crumbling base. The foundations, We know, of such a peace — the truth finds expression once again in the letter of Your Excellency — can be secure only if they rest on bed-rock faith in the one, true God, the Creator of all men. It was He who of necessity assigned man's purpose in life; it is from Him, with consequent necessity, that man derives personal, imprescriptible rights to pursue that purpose and to be unhindered in the attainment of it. Civil society is also of divine origin and indicated by nature itself ; but it is subsequent to man and meant to be a means to defend him and to help him in the legitimate exercise of his Godgiven rights. Once the State, to the exclusion of God, makes itself the source of the rights of the human person, man is forth-with reduced to the condition of a slave, of a mere civic commodity to be exploited for the selfish aims of a group that happens to have power. The order of God is overturned; and history surely makes it clear to those who wish to read, that the inevitable result is the subversion of order between peoples, is war. The task, then, before the friends of peace is clear.

Is Your Excellency over-sanguine in hoping to find men throughout the world ready to cooperate for such a worthy enterprise? We think not. Truth has lost none of its power to rally to its cause the most enlightened minds and noblest spirits. Their ardour is fed by the flame of righteous freedom struggling to break through injustice and lying. But those who possess the truth must be conscientious to define it clearly when its foes cleverly distort it, bold to defend it and generous enough to set the course of their lives, both national and personal, by its dictates. This will require, moreover, correcting not a few aberrations. Social injustices, racial injustices and religious animosities exist to-day among men and groups who boast of Christian civilization, and they are a very useful and often effective weapon in the hands of those who are bent on destroying all the good which that civilization has brought to man. It is for all sincere lovers of the great human family to unite in wresting those weapons from hostile hands. With that union will come hope that the enemies of God and free men will not prevail.

Certainly Your Excellency and all defenders of the rights of the human person will find whole-hearted cooperation from God's Church. Faithful custodian of eternal Truth and loving mother of all, from her foundation almost two thousand years ago, she has championed the individual against despotic rule, the labouring-man against oppression, Religion against persecution. Her divinely-given mission often brings her into conflict with the powers of evil, whose sole strength is in their physical force and brutalized spirit, and her leaders are sent into exile or cast into prison or die under torture. This is history of today. But the Church is unafraid. She cannot compromise with an avowed enemy of God. She must continue to teach the first and greatest commandment incumbent on every man : « thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength », and the second like unto the first : « thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ». It is her changeless message, that man's first duty is to God, then to his fellow-man; that that man serves his country best who serves his God most faithfully; that the country that would shackle the word of God given to men through Jesus Christ helps not at all the lasting peace of the world. In striving with all the resources at her power to bring men and nations to a clear realization of their duty to God, the Church will go on, as she has always done, to offer the most effective contribution to the world's peace and man's eternal salvation.

We are pleased that the letter of Your Excellency has given Us the opportunity of saying a word of encouragement for all those who are gravely intent on buttressing the fragile structure of peace until its foundation can be more firmly and wisely established. The munificent charity shown by the American people to the suffering and oppressed in every part of the world, truly worthy of the finest Christian traditions, is a fair token of their sincere desire for universal peace and prosperity. The vast majority of the peoples of the world, We feel sure, share that desire, even in countries where free expression is smothered. God grant their forces may be united towards its realization. There is no room for discouragement or for relaxing of their efforts. Under the gracious and merciful providence of God, the Father of all, what is good and holy and just will in the end prevail.

Let Us assure Your Excellency of Our cordial welcome to Mr. Taylor, your personal representative,

on his return to Rome; and We are happy to renew the expression of Our good wishes for the people of the United States, for the members of their government and in particular for its esteemed Chief Executive.

From Castel Gandolfo, August 26, 1947.

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