



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII
ALLA COMMISSIONE AMERICANA PER
GLI SCAMBI CULTURALI CON L'ITALIA****

Venerdì, 18 maggio 1956

Our days are crowded, as you know, visiting scholars from overseas; the pressure of work is unremitting. But We could not, We did not wish to say « No » to the request of your Spokesman, the Director of the American Commission for Cultural Exchanges with Italy. Rather We are happy for the occasion to say a brief word of praise and encouragement of the work of this Commission.

Its very name clears the air of the oppressive preponderance of what is only material and bids for the mutual interest of nations in the achievements of the human spirit. It discerns the substance from the shadow; it is interested in ideas, not gadgets. Striking a just balance between material and spiritual values, it would indeed be happy to see the standard of living more generally raised, so that man's soul less shackled by the demands of bodily existence might look up from this sordid earth and with expanding powers take hope and comfort and joy in contemplating the height and breadth of the eternal worth mirrored in God's creation.

Looking over the roster of your names and the accompanying information given to Us, We observe that half the States of the Union, from coast to coast and from the Gulf to the northern border, are represented in your group. The fields of your study and research are diverse and comprehensive. They testify to a wide-spread and vital devotion to the advancement of learning; and We are sure that you will find here in Rome more than ordinary opportunities and a ready collaboration on the part of scholars to assist you.

But you will not be satisfied finding in Rome only the manifold treasures of Art and Science and Philosophy. If Rome is eternal, as the ancient poets sang and the story of the rise and fall of an empire, of persecution, sack and resurgence only Confirms, it is because she has been the depository of eternal verities, heir to a culture which, permeated and transformed by the teachings

of Christ and by the power of His Cross carried over mountain and plain into the homes of prince and peasant alike, fixed for the peoples of the West their concept of law, their social customs and the basis of their institutions. This culture, that recognizes man's place in the universe, his origin and destiny, his rights and his responsibilities, gives a meaning, and a finality to the endeavours and accomplishments of his intellectual and moral powers. From it flowed the inspiration that gave the world a Chartres and a Cologne, a Dante and the Poor Man of Assisi, a Raphael and Michael Angelo, a Palestrina and Lasso and a host of other giants in the world of culture, who have added lustre to the pages of the history of western civilization. Your investigations and studies have brought you into intimate, one might almost say personal contact with them, and long familiarity will disclose the secret of the love of Truth and Beauty and the power to give them expression. The culture they represent belongs to the world.

With these few words We extend Our good wishes for your success in strengthening the bond of cultural interests between the peoples of different nations, and with paternal affection We pray God's blessing on you and your dear ones.

**Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII, XVIII,*

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