

Text of Christmas Message of Our Supreme Pontiff Assuring the World That Christianity Has Not Failed

(By Radio to N.O.W.C. News Service)

VATICAN CITY, Dec. 24.—Following is a complete English translation of the 1941 Christmas message of His Holiness Pope Pius XII.

In the dawnlight of the Holy Feast of the Nativity of Our Divine Saviour, an occasion anticipated always with a lively sense of pride and penetrating joy, as men again prepare to bow down and kneel in adoration before the ineffable mystery of the merciful bounty of God, Who in His infinite charity wished to offer to humanity as His greatest and most august gift His only begotten Son, our heart goes out to you, beloved sons and daughters in every corner of the earth, and Our thoughts, while not abandoning this world, are raised above it to penetrate the heavenly realms.

The star which served as the guiding light to the cradle of the newborn Redeemer even after twenty centuries is still marvelously resplendent in the skies of Christianity.

The Gentiles raged and the nations met together against the Lord and against His guidance.

LIGHT WILL NEVER FADE

In the face of human strifes and tempests the light of that star has never faded. It is not fading now and it will never fade. To it belong the past, present and future. That shining light has admonished us never to despair. It shines on people even when on the earth, as in an ocean raging in a storm, there is an intensification of those sinister whirlwinds which are the source and origin of widespread carnage and misery.

Its light is the light of comfort, of hope, of immovable faith, of life and of certainty in the ultimate triumph of the Redeemer which will overflow as a torrent of salvation for the interior peace and glory of all those who, raised to the supernatural order of grace, will have received the power of becoming children of God because they are born of God.

We, therefore, Who in these bitter times of warring upheaval are tortured by your tortures and sorrowed by your sorrows, We who live with you under the awful incursions of a scourge which is tearing at humanity for still a third year, wish to speak to you from Our paternal heart on this vigil of the solemn Feast of Christmas to exhort you to remain always strong in your faith and to share with you the comfort of that very real, abundant and elevating hope and certainty which radiates from the crib of the new-born Saviour.

Indeed, beloved children, if our eyes were to be focused only on material and carnal things they would scarcely find any reason for comfort.

JOYOUS MESSAGE

True, the bells ring out their joyous message of Christmas. The churches and oratories are alight, religious chants brighten men's spirits; all is festal and decorative in the sacred temples but humanity goes on tearing itself to pieces in a war of extermination.

In the sacred ceremonies of this Holy Season the Church echoes the beautiful antiphon "Rex pacis magnificatus est eulc caltrum declinat unversa terra"—the King of Peace upon Whose countenance all men desire to gaze has been glorified—the first antiphon of the vesper of the Feast of the Nativity.

But this resounds in strident contrast with the events about us whose roar over hill and dale creates a terrifying fracas, devastating lands and homes over wide areas and throwing millions of men and their families into unhappiness, misery and death.

DEMONSTRATIONS OF VALOR

To be sure, there are many admirable demonstrations of indomitable valor in the defense of rights and of native soil, of severity in the sorrow of souls living through a holocaust of flames for the triumph of truth and justice. But it is indeed with a depressing anguish that we recall and see in a dream, lost upon the torrid sea and bloody conflict which has marked this year new drawings to a close upon the unhappy lot of the wounded and of the prisoners of war, upon the physical and spiritual sufferings, the carnage, the destruction and ruin which martial warfare leaves in its wake in large and populous cities and in that industrial centers.

It is with that same anguish that we look upon the depleted resources of nations and upon the millions of people who are being hurled into a state of misery and total exhaustion by this ruthless conflict and by its brutal violence. And while the strength and health of a great part of youth which was in the process of maturing are being weakened through the privations imposed by the present scourge, the war expenditures and debts are rising to levels never dreamed of before.

Such large-scale disbursements, giving rise as they must to a contraction of the forces of production in the civil and social field, cannot but be the basis for serious anxiety on the part of those who turn their thoughts with preoccupation towards the future.

RULE OF LAW PERVERTED

The very idea of force stifles and perverts the rule of law, offers the possibility and free opportunity to individuals and to social or political groups to violate the property and the rights of others and permits all the other destructive forces to upset and agitate the civil atmosphere until it becomes a raging tempest and you shall see the notions of good and evil, of right and injustice, lose their well-defined outlines, become blurred and confused and finally threaten to disappear.

Those who, by virtue of the pastoral ministry, are enabled to penetrate the depths of men's hearts, know and see what an accumulation of sorrows and unspeakable anxieties take root in many souls and diminish therein the longing for the enjoyment of labor and life; sorrows and anxieties which suffocate men's spirits and render them silent and indolent, suspending and almost devoid of hope, in the face of the events and requirements of the times.

These are anxieties of the soul which no one may take lightly if he has at heart the genuine good of peoples and desires to promote a return in the near future to normal and ordered conditions of life and action. Faced with this view of the present, men sense a feeling of bitter disappointment which has invaded their very hearts, especially since their eyes today to be no open road to agreement between the belligerent parties whose reciprocal war aims and programs would seem to be irreconcilable.

CHRISTIANITY ACCUSED

When the causes of the present calamities are examined, causes which leave mankind perplexed, the opinion is frequently ventured that Christianity has failed in its mission. Whence comes such an accusation and by whom is it made? Would it be from those Apostles who were the glory of Christ? From those heroic and zealous exponents of faith and justice? From those pastors and priests, heralds of Christianity, who in suffering persecutions and martyrdom brought about the civilization of barbarous peoples and prostrated them in devotion before the altar of Christ? Would it be that such an accusation was made by those noble men who initiated the Christian civilization, who saved the remnants of the wisdom and art of Athens and Rome, who united peoples in the Name of Christ, Who taught wisdom and virtue, Who raised the Cross above the airy pinnacles and vaults of the cathedrals, those replicas of heavenly beauty and monuments of faith and piety which still elevate their lofty and venerable towers in the midst of the ruins of Europe? Would it be they who make that accusation?

Not Christianity, whose force derives from Him Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life and Who is with it and shall remain with it until the consummation of the world, has not failed in its mission but men have rebelled against that Christianity which is true and faithful to Christ and His doctrine.

In its place they have fashioned Christianity to their liking, a new idol which does not give, which is not opposed to the passions of carnal desires nor to the greed for gold and silver which fascinates nor to the pride of life; a new religion without a soul or a soul without religion, a mask of dead Christianity without the spirit of Christ. And they have proclaimed that Christianity has failed in its mission.

RELIGIOUS ANEMIA

Let us borrow deeply into the consciousness of modern society. Let us seek out the root of the evil.

Where does it thrive? Here again, of course, we do not wish to withhold the praise due to the wisdom of those rulers who either favored always or who desired and were capable of restoring to their place of honor, to the advantage of the people, the values of Christian civilization in the amicable relations between Church and State, in the safeguarding of the sanctity of marriage, in the religious education of youth. But we cannot close Our eyes to the sad spectacle of the progressive deChristianization, both individual and social, which from moral laxity had developed into a general state of weakness and brought about the open denial of truth and of those influences whose function it is to illuminate our minds in the matter of good and evil and to fortify family life, private life and the public life of the State.

A religious anemia, like a spreading contagion, has so afflicted many peoples of Europe and of the world and has created in their souls such a moral void that no serious and rational religious or international philosophy will serve to fill this emptiness. Is it not true that for decades and centuries past men have directed their every thought, word and deed to their sworn objective of tearing from the hearts of our young and old alike their faith in God, the Creator and Father of all, Rewarder of good and Avenger of evil, and have they not striven for the accomplishment of this goal through a process of radical change in education and instruction, opposing and opposing by every art and means the diffusion of the spoken and printed word, and by the abuse of scientific knowledge and political power, the religion and the Church of Christ?

NO OTHER COURSE

For the human spirit, overwhelmed in the confusion of this moral abyss by its alienation from God and Christian practices, no other course remained but that of turning off its thoughts, purposes and enterprises and every evaluation of men's possessions, actions and labor and directing them to the material world, striving and sweating with might and main to spread out in space, to surpass all previous accomplishments in the attainment of riches and power, to engage in a competition of speed, to produce in greater quantity and quality everything that material and advancement and progress seemed to require.

Hence, we witnessed in the political sphere, the prevalence of an unrestrained impulse towards expansion and mere political advantage to the disregard of moral principles in the field of economics, the domination of great, gigantic enterprises and trusts in social life, the uprooting and crowding of masses of the people in distressing and excessive concentration in the great cities and centers of industry and commerce, with all the uncertainty which is an inevitable consequence when men in large numbers, change their homes and residences, their countries and trades, their attachments and friendships.

It followed from this, then, that the contact and relationship between men in their social life took on a character that was purely physical and mechanical, with a contemptuous disregard for every reasonable moderation and consideration. The rule of external compulsion, mere possession of power, overruled the norms of right and order governing human association and community life which emanated

from God, determine the natural and supernatural relationship that should prevail in the co-existence of law and love as applied to the individual and to society.

DEGRADED AND SUPPRESSED

The majesty and dignity of the particular social groups became a dead letter, degraded and suppressed by the idea that might makes right. The right to private property became, for some, a power to be used for the exploitation of the labor of their fellowmen; in others that right enkindled a spirit of jealousy, intolerance and hatred and the organizations that resulted therefrom was converted into a powerful weapon to be used in conflict by the contending parties to gain the advantage for their particular interests.

In some countries, a godless and anti-Christian conception of the State bound to the individual to itself with its vast tentacles in such a way as to almost deprive him of all independence, and this no less in his private than in his public life.

Who today can be surprised that such radical opposition to the principles of Christian teaching has finally found its outlet in so intense a clash of internal and external enemies as to lead to the extermination of human lives and the destruction of worldly goods?

The spectacle which we are now beholding with such profound sorrow is the unhappy consequence and fruit of the social condition we have described. The war, far from arresting this influence and development, promotes it, accelerates it and spreads it with increasing ruin the longer it endures, rendering the catastrophe ever more general.

MATERIALISM CONDEMNED

From Our words, directed against the materialism of the past century and of the present time, it would be wrong to deduce a condemnation of technical progress.

No, we do not condemn that which is a gift of God Who, just as He causes the bread-yielding wheat to rise from the sod of the earth, has also hidden in the bowels of the earth from the time of the world's creation treasures of fire, of metals, of precious stones to be uncovered by the hand of man for his needs, for his works, and for his progress.

For the Church, mother of so many universities of Europe, while continuing to exalt and gather together the most fearless masters of the sciences and professions or nature, does not fail, at the same time, to bear in mind that all God's gifts and the very freedom of the human will itself can be used in a way to merit praise and reward, or blame and condemnation. Thus, it has happened that the spirit and the tendency with which technical progress was often put to use have brought it about that in our time technology must expiate its error and be, as it were, its own avenger by producing instruments of destruction which destroy today what it had erected yesterday.

In the face of the enormity of the disaster which has had its origin in the sword indiscriminate—Ed. We have indicated there is no other remedy than that of a return to the altars, at the foot of which numberless generations of the faithful in former times drew down upon themselves divine blessings and moral strength for the fulfillment of their duties, a return to the faith which enlightened individuals and society as a whole, and indicated to them their respective rights and duties, a return to the wise and unshakable norms of the social order which, in affairs of national as well as international import, erect an efficacious barrier against the abuse of liberty and against the misuse of power. But the recall of these beneficent sources must be especially loud, persistent and universal in that hour when the old order will be about to give way and cede its place to the new.

RECONSTRUCTION NEEDS

The future reconstruction will present and offer very valuable opportunities to advance the forces of good but it will also be fraught with the danger of a lapse into errors which will favor the forces of evil and there will be demanded prudent sincerity and mature reflection, not only by reason of the gigantic difficulty of the task but also because of the grave consequences which, in the case of failure, would result in both material and spiritual spheres. There will be required sound intellects and

will, strong in their purposes: men of courage and enterprise, but above and before all, there must be consciences which, in their planning, in their deliberations and in their actions are animated, moved and sustained by as lively sense of responsibility and which do not shrink from submission to the holy laws of God.

For if, to the vigor which shapes the material order, there be not united in the moral order the highest reflection and sincere purpose, then, undoubtedly, we will see verified the judgment of St. Augustine: "They run well but they have left the track; the farther they run the greater is their error, for they are going ever farther from their course." Nor would it be the first time that men who, in the expectation of being crowned at war's end with the laurel wreath of victory, have dreamed of giving to the world a new order by pointing out new ways which in their opinion lead to well-being, prosperity and progress. Yet whenever they have yielded to the temptation of imposing their own interpretation, contrary to the dictates of reason, moderation, justice and the nobility of man, they have found themselves disheartened and stupefied in the contemplation of the ruins of deluded hopes and miscarried plans.

SHORT-LIVED TREATIES

Thus, history teaches that treaties of peace stipulated in a spirit and with conditions opposed both to the dictates of morality and to genuine political wisdom, have had but a wretched and short-lived existence, and so have revealed and testified to an error of calculation, human, indeed, but fatal nonetheless.

Now the destruction brought about by the present war is on so vast a scale that it is imperative that there be not added to it also the further ruin of a frustrated and deluded peace. In order to avoid so great a calamity it is fitting that in the formulation of that peace there should be assured the cooperation, with sincerity of will and energy, with the purpose of a generous participation, not only of this or that party, but of all people, yea, rather of all humanity. It is a universal undertaking for the common good which requires the collaboration of all Christendom in the religious and moral aspects of the new edifice that is to be constructed.

We are, therefore, making use of Our right; or better, We are fulfilling Our duty as today, on this eve of the Holy Feast of Christmas, the divine dawn of hope and of peace for the world, with all the authority of Our Apostolic ministry, and with the fervent impulse of Our heart, We direct the attention and the consideration of the entire world to the dangers which lie in wait to threaten a peace which is to be the well-prepared basis for a truly new order and which is to fulfill the expectation and desires of all peoples for a more tranquil future.

UNSHAKABLE ROCK

Such a new order, which all the peoples desire to see brought into being after the trials and the ruins of this war, must be founded on that immovable and unshakable rock, the moral law which the Creator Himself has manifested by means of the natural order and which He has engraved with indelible characters in the hearts of men; that moral law whose observance must be inculcated and fostered by the public opinion of all nations and of all States with such a unanimity of voice and energy that no one may dare to call into doubt or weaken its binding force.

Like a shining beacon, this moral law must direct by the light of its principles, the course of action of men and of States, and they must all follow its admonishing, salutary and profitable precepts if they do not wish to abandon to the tempest and to ultimate shipwreck every labor and every effort for the establishment of a new order.

Consequently, recapitulating and integrating what we have expounded on other occasions, we insist once again on certain fundamental conditions essential for an international order which will guarantee for all peoples a just and lasting peace and which will be a beautiful source of well-being and prosperity.

(To Be Continued Next Week)

Nine Masses in 3 Days Unusual Privilege of Priests in England

LONDON—(NC)—Many priests here had the opportunity of saying nine Masses in three days recently and it is considered unlikely that such an opportunity has ever appeared before.

Owing to the scattering of the population some priests have the privilege of saying three Masses on Sundays and days of obligation. Thus on All Saints' Day (a Saturday) they could say three Masses, and three more on the following day. All priests were allowed, of course, to say three Masses on All Souls' Day (Monday).