



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN XXIII
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUTH
(CULTURAL COOPERATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE)*Sunday, 2 September 1962***

Gentlemen, your group is the first one that We have received in Rome since We left the summer residence of Castelgandolfo yesterday evening. We are very pleased that it is composed of young students. Thanks to a happy initiative, you have come here from many European countries to complete your training as architects and city-planners in this city, so rich in memories. It is a joy to Us to welcome in you the student youth of all the peoples of the earth.

It is the Catholic Church that greets you in the person of the humble successor of St. Peter. As you know, she, the guardian of the perpetual youth of the Gospel, is preparing to assemble a council in the Vatican Basilica, quite near here. The very imminence of this event has moved the Pope to return to Rome sooner than in previous years. The bishops of the whole world, by their number and their diversity of origin, and by the singular power of their testimony, will cause a vernal hymn of youth to rise toward heaven. The essential nature of a council surely has not escaped you. Perhaps your very profession enables you to understand it more than others do, for you have the task of building contemporary cities and residences whose boldness of design aims at having nothing to envy in the buildings of the golden ages of architecture. The Council intends to build a new structure on the foundations laid in the course of history, with the divine and human means that the Church has at her disposal. It is quite obvious that it is not a question of new doctrine, of sensational formulas. But the Council, making its own the words of the Baptist, repeated by Jesus, «poenitentiam agite, appropinquavit enim regnum coelorum» [Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand] (Matt. 3, 2 and 4, 17), will extend the scope of charity to the various needs of peoples and will present Christ's message to them in a clearer way. This implies for man a change of heart, new strength of spirit, and clear and active faith. These conditions of renewal stir up the fervor of Christianity, first of all, but they cannot leave indifferent the wise and good men of the whole world. Architects declare that their art aims to establish lines and masses, to compose pleasant places for man, where his body finds health and comfort, where his spirit expands in joy and light. Moreover, «light», «space», «nature», are terms found as often as «functional» in writings on architecture. In fact, its achievements are intended to serve man and satisfy his needs and those of the various communities in which he flourishes. Well, that is exactly what the Church seeks to do, with her own means and in her own domain. Furthermore, it is by reflecting on her past existence that she intends to renew herself. Does not your presence in this city, dear young people, have a similar meaning? Does not the contemplation of monuments left here by successive centuries and of the powerful lessons that can be drawn from them contribute useful information to the architect who wishes to give man a design that is better adapted to his personal, family, and social life, and that inclines him more to moral rightness, to professional work, to fraternal friendliness with his neighbors? In bringing to a close these confidential words which your presence has suggested, may We express to you a wish that We have at

heart? Perhaps in the course of your career you will have to build a place of prayer, a house of God. Understand well then the full responsibility which will fall on you: before drawing up your design, meditate on Holy Scripture, enter into the spirit of the liturgy, and then animate the work of your mind and hand with the breath of a personal prayer. These are the conditions for a successful realization of a work so great. With the assurance that you will all understand this desire, We heartily call down upon you, dear sirs, upon your families and upon your works, a generous shower of divine blessings.

**The Pope Speaks*, vol. 8 n° 3 p. 230-231.