



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
FOR THE FOURTH CENTENARY
OF THE BIRTH OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE***

Thursday, 12 November 1964

We feel it our duty to thank the promoters of this commemoration of the fourth centenary of the birth of William Shakespeare, for the kind invitation which they have extended to this admirable evocation of the life and art of the great poet.

We also express Our pleasure to the British Catholic communities in Rome for this undertaking, and We are happy to note the generous collaboration given by friends, by artists and by the Italian authorities. Particular praise is due to the directors and actors of the Royal Stratford Theatre for their presentation of scenes and recitations from the works of Shakespeare, which we have all enjoyed and appreciated.

This brief spectacle brings many thoughts to Our mind, starting with the visit We made about thirty years ago, as an enquiring and hasty tourist, to the city and the home of Shakespeare in Stratford-on-Avon, and continuing with the impression of fantastic riches and psychological truth which We experienced through the limited knowledge which school lessons and private reading gave Us of the work of the great poet; and concluding today with the thought that this commemoration is particularly adapted to Rome, always avid and prompt as she is to honour the high achievements of the human spirit, and happy as she is today to celebrate, in this supreme writer, the magnificent cultural tradition and artistic genius of the English people. We take especial pleasure in noting how the profound humanity of Shakespeare, ever open to adventurous and poetic exploration, leads to the discovery of the moral laws, which make life great and sacred, and lead us back to a religious understanding of the world.

His lofty genius and powerful language induce men to listen with reverence to the great verities he expounds, of death and judgment, of hell and heaven. The plots of his plays are a salutary

reminder to modern man that God exists, that there is a life after this life, that evil doing is punished and good rewarded.

Our enjoyment of the poet's vision of humanity should not make us overlook the high moral lessons and admonitions contained in his works. With the prayer that meditation and consideration may bear this valuable fruit, We gladly bestow upon the actors and their colleagues, upon all of you and your loved ones at home. Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.