



The Holy See

***LETTERA DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO XII
AI PRESIDENTE DEGLI STATI UNITI,
FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT****

19 maggio 1943

Your Excellency,

Almost four years have now passed since, in the name of the God the Father of all and with the utmost earnestness at Our command, We appealed (August 24, 1939) to the responsible leaders of peoples to hold back the threatening avalanche of international strife and to settle their differences in the calm, serene atmosphere of mutual understanding. «Nothing was to be lost by peace; everything might be lost by war». And when the awful powers of destruction broke loose and swept over a large part of Europe, though Our Apostolic Office places Us above and beyond all participation in armed conflicts, We did not fail to do what We could to keep out of the war nations not yet involved and to mitigate as far as possible for millions of innocent men, women and children, defenceless against the circumstances in which they have to live, the sorrows and sufferings that would inevitably follow along the constantly widening swath of desolation and death cut by the machines of modern warfare.

The succeeding years unfortunately have seen heart-rending tragedies increase and multiply; yet We have not for that reason, as Our conscience bears witness, given over Our hopes and Our efforts in behalf of the afflicted members of the great human family everywhere. And as the Episcopal See of the Popes is Rome, from where through these long centuries they have ruled the flock entrusted to them by the divine Shepherd of souls, it is natural that amid all the vicissitudes of their complex and chequered history the faithful of Italy should feel themselves bound by more than ordinary ties to this Holy See, and have learned to look to it for protection and comfort especially in hours of crisis.

In such an hour today their pleading voices reach Us carried on their steady confidence that they

will not go unanswered. Fathers and mothers, old and young every day are appealing for Our help; and We, whose paternal heart beats in unison with the sufferings and sorrows of ail mankind, cannot but respond with the deepest feelings of Our soul to such insistent prayers, lest the poor and humble shall have placed their confidence in Us in vain.

And so very sincerely and confidently We address Ourselves to Your Excellency, sure that no one will recognize more clearly than the Chief Executive of the great American nation the voice of humanity that speaks in these appeals to Us, and the affection of a father that inspires Our response.

The assurance given to Us in 1941 by Your Excellency's esteemed Ambassador Mr. Myron Taylor and spontaneously repeated by him in 1942 that «America has no hatred of the Italian people» gives Us confidence that they will be treated with consideration and understanding; and if they have had to mourn the untimely death of dear ones, they will yet in their present circumstances be spared as far as possible further pain and devastation, and their many treasured shrines of Religion and Art, – precious heritage not of one people but of ail human and Christian civilization – will be saved from irreparable ruin. This is a hope and prayer very dear to Our paternal heart, and We have thought that its realization could not be more effectively ensured than by ex- pressing it very simply to Your Excellency.

With heartfelt prayer We beg God's blessings on Your Excellency and the people of the United States.

**Actes et Documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale, vol. 7 p.349-350.*