



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII
PER L'INAUGURAZIONE DELLA NUOVA SEDE DEL
PONTIFICIO COLLEGIO AMERICANO DEL NORD****

Mercoledì, 14 ottobre 1953

On this day of joyous fulfillment and promise, most eminent Members of the Sacred College, Venerable Brothers and dearly beloved sons, the mind naturally goes back to that January day ninety-three years ago, when Our predecessor of saintly memory went to the old convent building on the via dell'Umiltà, to honour by His presence and encourage by His fatherly counsel the nascent North American College, most recent child of His pontifical zeal and universal charity; and there seemed to come clear over the span of almost a century a voice calling for another Pius to dedicate to God and the service of the Church the successor to via dell'Umiltà. So We have come to be with you this morning, to give a palpable proof that Our heart beats in unison with your paean of jubilation and thanksgiving to God.

For several years now We have followed with keen interest the preparation and the construction of your new seminary. Our Venerable Brother, the Rector, devoted, courageous, vigilant of every detail, kept Us informed of its progress, until with Our own eyes We saw it, reflecting the morning sun, like a city seated on a mountain. Let Us tell you some of the thoughts it stirred within Our soul.

This is a building that has its foundations set deep on the generous and often trying sacrifices of the Bishops, the Alumni and the loyal faithful whom they serve. God reward them. Its large and majestic though severe lines, drawn by an architect of rare distinction in his profession, have been measured by the far-seeing wisdom of a zealous hierarchy. Its completion lights a stronger flame of hope for the Church in the United States of America and in the world. All this, it seemed to Us, adds up to a grave and sacred responsibility that rests on you, Our dear young seminarians, and on those who are to follow you. Will the sacrifices cheerfully offered for your sake be repaid in kind and with interest, Will the hopes and plans cherished by your Bishops, cherished by Us, be

fulfilled? Your eager hearts are quick to answer: yes. But reflect a moment. That will be true only under one condition, that you become priests worthy of the name.

In the priesthood man is elevated to an almost staggering height, a mediator between a world in travail and the celestial kingdom of peace. Christ's ambassador, steward of God's mysteries, he exercises a divine power. Heir to the priestly and kingly offices of the divine Redeemer, he is commissioned to carry on the task of salvation, bringing souls to God and giving God to souls. Never, then, unmindful of the supreme importance of such a vocation, the priest will not busy himself with useless things. Modeling his life on that of Him he represents he will gladly spend and be spent on behalf of souls. Souls he seeks everywhere and always, not what the world can offer him. « To be a priest and to be a man dedicated to work is one and the same thing wrote Bl. Pius X; and he liked to quote the words of the synod presided over by St. Charles Borromeo: « let every cleric repeat again and again : he has been called not to a life of ease and leisure, but to hard work in the spiritual army of the Church ».

Those words, beloved sons, recall another fact that one dare not forget. We belong to the Church militant; and she is militant because on earth the powers of darkness are ever restless to encompass her destruction. Not only in the far-off centuries of the early Church, but down through the ages and in this our day, the enemies of God and Christian civilization make bold to attack the Creator's supreme dominion and sacrosanct human rights. No rank of the clergy is spared; and the faithful — their number is legion — inspired by the valiant endurance of their shepherds and fathers in Christ, stand firm, ready to suffer and die, as the martyrs of old, for the one true Faith taught by Jesus Christ. Into that militia you seek to be admitted as leaders.

Imprisonment and martyrdom, We know, do not loom on the horizon that spreads before your eyes. In an atmosphere of untrammelled freedom, where « the word of God is not bound », the Church in your country has grown in numbers, in influence, in strength of leadership in all that makes for the good of the commonwealth. The college on the via dell'Umiltà has seen your priests increase from twenty-five hundred to forty-five thousand and more — proud and glorious tribute to the unselfish, clear-visioned Catholic family life that prevails among you; a mission country become a seminary of apostles for foreign fields. But the Church militant is « one body, with one Spirit... with the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism » (*Eph.* 4, 4 ff). And that Spirit calls for more than a dash of heroism in every priest who would be worthy of the name, whatever the external circumstances of time and place. The spirit of the martyrs breathes in every priestly soul, who in the daily round of pastoral duties and in his cheerful, unrelenting efforts to increase in wisdom and in grace, gives witness to the Prince of shepherds, who endured the cross, despised the shame « when He gave Himself up on our behalf, a sacrifice breathing out fragrance as He offered it to God » (*Eph.* 5, 2).

We raise a fervent prayer to Mary Immaculate, under whose patronage you have placed your country, to Mary gloriously assumed into heaven, whom you have wished to honour in your chapel

here, that she would always show a mother's loving care of the clergy of America, and guide you, beloved seminarians, bearers of such high hopes, along the way that leads to that holiness which will bring her to recognize in you a greater and greater resemblance to her own divine Son.

And thus, venerable Brothers of America, this seminary will be your pride and your delight. All the dioceses of your country, will, We hope, receive of its apostolic power. For generations to come it will stand as a monument to your love of Rome and devotion to the See of Peter, and your successors and their successors will take inspiration from your enlightened and admirable pastoral zeal to carry the Church in your loved country on to yet greater conquests of souls for God's eternal Kingdom.

May the Apostolic Blessing, which We impart to you, venerable Brothers, beloved sons, to all here present, to all the alumni and to all who contribute to support this seminary, be a token of Our deep affection and a channel of rich graces for your souls.

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