



The Holy See

**DISCORSO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII
AL PERSONALE DEI «CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES»***

Lunedì, 12 dicembre 1955

Coming on such a festal day as this you cannot but expect to hear a word on Mary, on that precious, unparalleled privilege, which from the first instant of her being, flooded her soul with grace divine, making it reflect in its sheer white beauty the infinite holiness of her God, who was to become her Son. Privilege indeed that drew to her at once the love of her Creator, the while it pointed up the sad lot common to men born an object of God's wrath (*Eph. 2, 3*); privilege that adds glory to the redemptive power of the divine sacrifice on Golgotha. In honouring Mary, in every thought of her, We do homage to the superabundant mercy and love of the Redeemer of men, all of whom He wishes to draw into union with Himself through grace and His Holy Spirit.

That generous pity and love for men you share, beloved members of Catholic Relief Services; it is the driving power behind your daily labour for the suffering members of Christ. And no doubt you have at times felt the need of a luminous Faith to supply fuel for a charity that dare not be chilled by suspicion or thoughtless lack of gratitude, and will add warmth and tenderness to your service of the needy. Such a Faith led that most admirable apostle of charity, Frederic Ozanam, to see always in the poor sacred images of God, on their care-worn brows to discern traces of the Crown of Thorns. And is it not He Who deigns to suffer in His poor? « I was hungry », He said, « and you gave me to eat. » The immortal Augustine warns you to love not as they love who corrupt innocence or faith; not as men love each other simply because they are fellows of the same human race; but as they love who know and profess that all men are kin to God, sons of the Most High, in whom must be formed and perfected a brother's likeness to the only begotten Son. (*In Ioann. Evang. tract. 65 n. I - Migne PL, t. 35 col. 1808*).

And that strikes another note that must not be allowed to perish in the noisy onrush of human activities. Yours is more than Social Service; yours is a work of charity. You bring bread to nourish the body and clothes to shelter it against unfeeling elements; but all the while you seek to pour into

wounds, perhaps begun to fester, the oil of Christ's soothing message, that will give hope and encouragement, and then the peace that comes firm and lasting only after a humble and contrite soul turns to God and His Church.

We know that you, who are here present this morning, have rare opportunities to relieve in person that stark bareness of the garrett or the damp chill of field-shacks, where parents suffer and children weep. You must reap the harvest of your charity through others' hands. But it is the same love of Christ for men that holds you to your busy desks in crowded offices, where your work most often lacks the consoling sense that comes from witnessing an ebbing faith re-vitalized, suffering alleviated, the light of hope rekindled and joy rising on the horizon for families in distress. May Mary through her maternal intercession keep the fire of that love burning in full flame, and may Christ be your reward exceeding great.

As a token of Our own grateful satisfaction with your devoted work and of Our paternal affection, We are happy to impart to you and to all your dear ones the Apostolic Benediction.

**Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII, XVII,*

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