



The Holy See

DISCORSO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII AI DIRIGENTI DEL « NATO DEFENCE COLLEGE »*

Sala del Trono - Venerdì, 16 maggio 1958

This is not the first time that We have received members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Defence College. Is it that your College is taking on a permanent character? It is true that St. Peter raised his voice of warning to be sober and on the alert, because the enemy moves round and round like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour (*1 Petr.* 5, 8). And St. Paul counselled the Ephesians to put on the armour of God, that they might be able to stand up against the deceits of the devil. "For it is not against flesh and blood that we enter the lists, but... against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (*Eph.* 6, 11-12).

But they had in mind man's struggle against the enemies of God for the salvation of his immortal soul. That struggle in the order of the spirit will go on till the end of time, and never a day, never an hour, but every man must be individually on the alert to defend himself, if he would not be overcome. The purpose of your Defence college is quite different. It aims to teach you how to be alert against an attack from your own fellow-men in this world.

Is it not sad to reflect that such defence is necessary? That man would rob man of those rights, which are but the natural flowering of the inborn dignity of his person, enhanced infinitely by the value placed on it by the divine Redeemer? Would not one expect that all members of the vast human family should be happy to share in common their personal right, antecedent to any State, to fulfil their sacred duties to their Creator, as well as their national right to develop their own culture and character, free from the spectre of hostile force?

Yet one must face reality, is the reply. Yes, that is true; but at the same time with confidence and a reasonable optimism one will work towards the day, when protection and defence can be ensured with a minimum of force, and when Truth and equal justice for all shall be the guide-posts tenaciously followed by those, whose grave task it is to lead peoples to the supreme goal of a lasting peace. Truth and equal justice for all – how precious and ennobling; but how hollow those words ring for those who do not believe in God.

May God, then, hasten the dawning of that day, when all men will pay Him the homage of their faith and love. They will forge the link that will bind men together in harmony and peace.

With great trust in your resolute desire and purpose to advance the cause of that genuine peace, We are happy, gentlemen, to invoke God's blessings on you and your loved ones.

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