



FARMING AS VOCATION AND MISSION

ADDRESSES

**by His Holiness
Pope John XXIII**

National Catholic Welfare Conference

Addresses to delegates attending the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Congresses of the Italian National Confederation of Independent Farmers and to delegates at the 1959 biennial Food and Agricultural Organization conference.

Translations provided by NCWC News Service



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NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE
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Following is a translation of an address delivered on April 11, 1962 by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII to members of the Sixteenth Congress of the Italian National Confederation of Farmers.

The beginning of spring gives us the joy of this meeting with you, beloved sons and daughters of the Confederation of Italian Farmers. Your presence here near the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles constitutes a spectacle of faith and of Christian generosity, a reflowering of hope and of holy intentions, a token of abundant fruits for your families and for society.

We welcome you paternally and warmly with an open heart.

The peculiarity of the liturgical year causes your 16th national congress to be held at Easter time in the atmosphere of anxious expectation and of participation in the loftiest and most moving mysteries of our holy religion. The dignified simplicity and the suggestive beauty of the rites, held during these weeks speak to the hearts of all, to children and to adults, reaching to the depths of every heartstring, reposing for meditation the immeasurable greatness of the love of Jesus Christ for men, through the painful yet shining stages of His blessed Passion, of His painful Death unto the brilliance of His Resurrection.

Now, Easter and the holy rites that accompany it is celebrated particularly by country people as a manifestation of Christian life that renews itself. Behold the Easter retreats to prepare the soul for the purifying cleansing of penance. Be-

hold the quiet gatherings of men and youths, without mentioning those of the mothers of families and of daughters, at the Eucharistic feast in fervent meeting with the Divine Saviour.

The rites, celebrated decorously with the people participating in the chorus, the repetition of ancient and grave traditions which are celebrated in the different localities with significant variations, have a lofty educational goal; in the Good Friday processions when Blessed Jesus is carried in triumph, there is the glorification of sorrow, the great lesson from which man learns how to sublimate himself and to give himself with his eyes fixed on the Cross.

Then, in the pause of Holy Saturday, there is the sadness mingled with joy on the eve of Easter when mystical lights shine on souls, flooding them with the light of the Resurrection.

The expectation of the young people, who are preparing themselves for first Communion, also is very eloquent and spreads serenity among families.

These points serve to emphasize your gathering today, beloved sons, workers of the land, and the goals of your congress derive from them admirable teaching and uplift.

It is true that your concerns—according to the most recent themes submitted for your attention and for that of those people who must be concerned with your organization—are centered on the formulation of special requests for the legislators of your country for the development of the agricultural economy, for improving your living and working conditions in consonance with human dignity, and for obtaining other timely assistance such as is enjoyed by other workers.

The two congresses of the groups of rural women and of the young farmers stressed again respectively the new responsibilities of women in the changing agricultural world and the position of country youth within the framework of family enterprise. The contents of these questions are of a practical nature and the vastness of the points contained in them should be examined thoroughly.

In this program of positive assistance to the agricultural world, the Church, mother of all her sons, is close to you and shares your concern. You will remember certainly that last year, when We received you on April 19th, We announced to you the encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra*, which We had at heart "like a flame of doctrine and an aim of charity and brotherhood . . . for the spiritual and material welfare of all God's children, called to know Him and to belong to Him."¹

With new fervor, the encyclical broached, among other things, the problems inherent in the life of the land and called for greater justice in relations between the different sectors of production. To these pages are entrusted in fact the thoughts of the Church concerning the adequacy of essential public services in the rural world, the gradual and harmonious development of the economic system, the request for an appropriate political policy regarding taxation, loans and social security, for the control of prices and the adaptation of revenues, and finally for complete equalization in the structure of agricultural enterprise.

We have noted with satisfaction that your present congress has echoed these questions again and promotes their application. But allow Us to tell you that these questions cannot be completely settled through a program of statistical and economic details nor through simple technical and organizational solutions. The subject of agriculture, as the whole of social life in its various forms, is the human being, redeemed by Christ and enroute to eternal life.

This is particularly true regarding your work, beloved sons and daughters: "either because," as We said in *Mater et Magistra*, "they (the farmers) live their lives in the majestic temple of creation or because their work often concerns the life of plants and animals, a life that is inexhaustable in its expression, inflexible in its laws, rich in allusions to God, the Creator and Provider. . . . In the work of the farm the human personality finds a thousand incentives for self-expression, self-development, for enrichment, for growth even in regard to spiritual values. There-

¹ *Discourses, Messages and Talks*, III, 218.

fore, it is a work which is conceived and lived both as vocation and as mission.”²

There rises, therefore, before God and men, your activity which may have seemed less understood in the past than it is today.

Nothing is easy in the world, beloved sons and daughters. What is worth-while must be won with sweat and toil. Whoever believes differently should be pitied, because he shows that he wants to be outside the limits of providential order.

But with Jesus at one's side, with His grace in one's soul, daily duty becomes light, sorrow is transformed into an instrument of expiation and of redemption and man learns how to give himself for his own good, for that of the family and of his brethren. By accepting the difficulties of life, there grows internal peace which produces strength and serenity of character.

It is true that every effort must be made to adapt one's own position to the increased needs of a more profound justice and equity. This is a very clear teaching of Christian doctrine. But at the same time one must bear in mind that only faith and the love of God can temper recurring anxieties, economic ones too, and give energy to continue the patient toil of every day.

Beloved sons and daughters! Allow Us to repeat it to you. We are at your side in your expectations and hopes, in your joys and in your most shining achievements, with paternal good wishes and with Our daily prayers, with which We ask for you from the Lord all that your heart wishes and expects with honesty and simplicity.

May Our abundant and propitious apostolic benediction be a token of the blessings of Providence. This benediction We impart to you and to those dear to you who are far away, particularly to your children, to the sick, the aged, invoking for all a superabundance of the graces of the Lord.

² *Mater et Magistra* p. 43, May 15, 1961, NCWC edition.

Following is a translation of the address given on April 20, 1961 by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII to participants in the Fifteenth National Congress of the Italian Confederation of Independent Farmers.

We are here among you once more, beloved sons and daughters of the Italian Confederation of Independent Farmers. It is as though your 15th national congress received its completion close to the memory of the Prince of the Apostles. We very gladly greet with a paternal word and a wide blessing this joyful meeting of generous souls.

Our word above all is an invitation to hope.

The Confederation of Independent Farmers points out this year the not-always-favorable circumstances under which your work proceeds; furthermore, pondering with a sense of conscious responsibility on the hardship that ensues, it plans to call the attention of the authorities and of public opinion to the problems of your life that cannot be put off. "To restore faith to the farming world, by means of an organic and courageous agricultural policy": this is the subject proposed for general consideration.

Gaining in importance under such aspect is the work already accomplished not only by rural women's groups that have illustrated the value of woman's activity and the importance of her contribution to the agricultural enterprise, but also by groups of Young farmers, to present and guide the needs of young men in the face of present-day social progress, in its references to work and to conditions of farming life.

These topics interpret in sensitive and precise manner the legitimate expectations of the good people of the farms, whose work, which is accomplished with silent toil and a spirit of sacrifice, surely represents one of the most important factors of world economy, and deserves meanwhile every attention and foresight by those in authority.

The preoccupations mentioned above find in Our heart a ready and affectionate echo. They are related to a basic need

of moral and social life: *dignus est operarius mercede sua* ("for the laborer deserves his wages");¹ "The laborer is worthy of his wages:"² this is the word of Our Lord Jesus Christ, repeated with another nuance: *dignus est operarius cibo suo* ("for the laborer deserves his living.")³ Man's work is sacred, because it is the endeavor of a rational creature, raised to the dignity of son of God. Christian social doctrine is very clear on this point, and solemn pontifical documents exist to give testimony of the maternal attention of the Church for the guardianship of work.

Beloved sons and daughters!

Your anxieties find complete understanding. And it is precisely in the midst of present-day anxieties, as well as among the impassioned interest in remedies and in requested provisions, that Our word desires to sound as a call to hope and trust.

I—Faith in God, above all, without whose help nothing prosperous and lasting can be achieved even in material life.

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guard the city, the guard watches in vain. It is vain for you to rise before the light, to sit up late into the night, you who eat the bread of hard toil: for He is bountiful to His loved ones in sleep."⁴

Oh, how sweet are these words of the Psalm, inviting to look beyond one's own burden of daily anguish, to see over us the serene face of the heavenly Father!

A lofty title of honor to farmers is the integrity of religious life, constantly preserved and honestly lived. It instills this faith in the Lord, in his loving Providence, in his continuous aid to homes and families. We know with what fervor you celebrate each year, at the end of the long agricultural toil, the feast of thanksgiving, to raise to God the canticle of gratitude for the benefits received.

¹ *St. Luke*, 10, 7.

² *1. Tim.* 5, 18.

³ *Matt.* 10, 10.

⁴ *Psalms* 126, 1-2.

We know that your sections put in first place a careful work of religious and moral training, so well carried out by your ecclesiastic counsellors who are nearly always your pastors. Dear pastors! We greet them with great love because they are the precious and most valuable collaborators of the Pope and of the Bishops.

II—Thus, faith in God: but also **faith in yourselves**, in the admirable energies that God has given to every man for the development of his personality, in the form of life chosen by him.

In the first pages of the Bible there is written that God created man in his own image and likeness, . . . and put him into the terrestrial paradise, to dress it and keep it.⁵ What dignity and what strength comes to man from this divine transference, by reason of which it bears the imprint of the splendor of the heavenly Father—"Raise the light of thy countenance above us, O Lord!"⁶

Here is an inexhaustible source of humble, conscious faith in yourselves, in your own inventive and productive capabilities and in your own strength, created by God for the purpose of subduing the earth.⁷

When a nation, or part of it, becomes used to expecting everything from abroad and is more inclined to accuse others than to stimulate itself, there is reason to fear for its freedom and for its own life. Indeed, the help and the work of society are necessary and sometimes irreplaceable, as We again wish to say: but they cannot replace personal initiative, the keen industry of each person who thinks always of bettering himself by drawing on his resources of talent, capability and thrift.

It is therefore necessary that you have faith in yourselves: avoiding the subtle dangers of egotistical individualism that isolate and paralyze every effort; the obstacles of faint-heartedness, the habits of conformity.

It is necessary to cultivate a deep sense of solidarity and of mutual assistance, passing on to each other both efforts and

⁵ cf. *Gen.* 1, 27; 2, 7, 15; *Wis.* 2, 23; *Eccl.* 17, 1.

⁶ cf. *Ps.* 4, 7.

⁷ cf. *Gen.* 1, 28.

successes becoming organized into cooperatives and societies, placing yourselves at the level of the basic demands of today's social and economic life, which is at once union and collaboration for greater assured values of the fruits of one's own labor.

Here again the teachings of the Church are clear and encouraging, particularly in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Our Predecessor Leo XIII, the seventieth anniversary of which will occur next month. In it are encouraged all associative forms that permit those who work to join their labor to that of others, to guard it and increase it.

III—In the third place, We exhort you to have **faith in society**, whose most outstanding part is made up of your peaceful and orderly ranks. From it you must expect those laws and measures that you cannot make available to yourselves by means of your efforts alone; the same may be said of proper subsidies, of the different types of insurance and pensions, the granting of family allowances that your confederation, backed by your support, has tried up to now to obtain, or intends to achieve in the future.

Such measures, already granted to other social groups, are owed to you as a duty of justice: again, it is the *Rerum Novarum* that proposes wise norms: "Being absurd to provide for one part of the citizens and neglect the other part, it is the strict duty of the State to look after the well-being of workers: in not doing so, justice is offended as it wants everyone to have what rightly belongs to him . . . Thus, first among the many and serious duties of those in power, solicitous of the good of the people, is the one to provide distributive justice for each class of citizens with inviolable impartiality."⁸

The validity of such justice, inspired and based on the infallible one of God, is what animates your faith, and lends to your claims their highest value. And basing Ourselves on it, We also lend paternal encouragement to those who can and must provide for your needs and exigencies, in order that they be taken care of as soon as possible.

⁸ Leo XIII, *Pont. Max. Acta*. XI, 1892, pp. 121-122.

Have confidence, beloved sons and daughters!

The Church is with you, understands and encourages you. May the word of hope which today We have echoed forth, go with you on the way back to the homes that await you; may it sing in your heart during your working hours, in the satisfaction that work gives you, as well as in the unavoidable trials, whose merit adorns our terrestrial path; may it call you always to a filial and tender trust in God, that never abandons those that entrust themselves to Him.

Our prayer assiduously goes with you, so that you may remain faithful to your ideals and at the same time bring abundant fruits in every prosperity of the gifts of Heaven and of the earth.

Again We thank you for this evening meeting that brings such comfort to Our heart and gives liveliness to the prayer of these weeks after Easter which resound in hope, courage, and apostolic fervor.

The recurrences of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1st, and the 70th anniversary of the *Rerum Novarum* on the 15th of May, will give Us occasion to speak again to workers to renew to them and to the separate categories of workingmen the anxious, but at the same time courageous and generous, attention of the Church for the working world.

Afterwards will come the solemn Pontifical document, in the form of an Encyclical Letter, which We announced on December 29th of the past year. It is now being prepared and stays in the heart of the Pope as a flame of doctrine and aim of charity and of brotherhood humbly and firmly lived and affirmed, for the spiritual and material good of all God's children, called to know Him and to belong to Him.

While We again confirm to you all Our paternal affection, We are happy to leave with you as an encouraging and well-auguring pledge, Our particular comforting Apostolic Blessing, that in a special manner We reserve to your children, to sufferers, to the aged, so that in everyone and always there be the peace of God. *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.* (May God's peace be with you always.) Amen, Amen.

Following is a translation of an address given by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII on April 27, 1960 to the Fourteenth National Congress of the Italian National Confederation of Independent Farmers.

Beloved Sons and Daughters,

The moving and festive spectacle of your presence is a cause for joy and consolation.

Having come to Rome for the work of the 14th national congress of the Confederation of Independent Farmers, you bring Us the greetings and affection of your families, friends and acquaintances, who have followed you here with thoughts and entrusted to you a wish and a prayer.

Today you are representatives, in the house of your Father, of all the farmers of the earth: men and women marked with hard work, yet serene in their simplicity, patient in labor, sparing of ease, but rich in so many human and Christian virtues, lovers of family and of the nation, faithful to the Church.

Your presence is eloquent proof of the intensity and seriousness of your spiritual life. In fact, you have wished to listen to Our words and to receive Our encouragement.

For such an open profession of your Christianity We express to you Our paternal pleasure and We exhort you to perseverance. You have a precious heritage of principles and traditions. This alone can give meaning and purpose to your activities.

Your confederation is not the kind which has an exclusively economic and professional character, with the purpose of protecting the interests of your professional category.

On the contrary, it has been intended from the beginning to inspire your particular activities with the principles of Christian social doctrine that have been proclaimed before the entire world by the solemn papal documents, and that remain as milestones on the road of Christian edification in the world of

labor. This professed fidelity to the teachings of the Church is the distinctive characteristic of your association and its most noble and beautiful ornament. May We tell you that it is in this—over and above technical organization—that is found the secret of its expansion and youthful vitality. It is never bent upon results already obtained, but anxious for continuous search for new forms and new undertakings by means of an ever more efficacious tutelage of the great family of private farmers.

But in the midst of the many vexations of the different problems that are entailed by your present-day position and require an urgent solution, the primacy of the spiritual part, the search for supernatural and eternal values, is what you should have more at heart.

By this, We do not mean—as certain anti-Christian doctrines would have unskilled people believe—we do not mean that, keeping one's eyes on heavenly things, one should forget or neglect earthly things. On the contrary, one must have one's feet soundly planted on the earth to cooperate toward the betterment of one's own conditions.

This is always repeated by the Church in defense even of the material interests of its sons. Last year We mentioned to you in fact "the forthcoming and active entrance into the Common European Market, along with the complex questions that it entails, which require ordered adjustment to the new requirements so that one will be prepared for the evolution which is already under way."¹ And We formulated the wish that the need of a greater balance between your revenues and those of other professions and the burdens imposed by the demands of national economy be solved "according to the provident indications of the Christian social doctrine and in respect to the real situation of the farmer."²

Today We wish to confirm this statement again, because the just protection of your aspirations is a sacrosanct matter. And We trust that these wishes will have the support of those people who feel it their duty to exercise them with full respect

¹ *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 24, 1959, p. 3.

² *Ibid*

to the rights of all citizens. The provisions of a technical, economic nature which are under study, according to information given to Us, and which constitute the object of examination and discussion of your Congress, are a comforting consolation of this more diffused interest in your positive problems and of the concern of your confederation, which aims at a complete evaluation of rural life.

All this proves how the support of Christian principles does not mean the quiet adaptation to already existing conditions or the giving up of attempts to change them for the better in a healthy manner, but to work and strive to better one's own conditions of life, making one advance on the road to achieving a happy temporal prosperity.

A clear vision, therefore, of present reality, and at the same time one's eyes turned toward Heaven, (this is what is required). The Christian has this exalting prospect. The Christian worker who wishes to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and to the Church knows well that there can be no peace in hearts and families if the search for earthly prosperity is not accompanied by the holy fear of God, by respect for His eternal law, by esteem for heavenly grace. The Christian is aware of all this. And from this knowledge he derives that serene and thoughtful behavior that is the sign of real wisdom, that honesty and moral health that are reflected in the ordered harmony of the family in which the new sons of God, while growing pure and strong, prepare themselves for the trials of life.

This is the special characteristic of the dear people of the land. May you know how to keep the rich treasure of theological virtues—faith, hope and charity, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance—which make your family one of the soundest sectors of national life and a consolation for the Holy Church.

May you also keep—in the midst of the anxieties of these modern times and in the deep technical and economic changes now in progress, which will be placed in a still greater measure at your service—your eyes turned to Heaven, and your heart

full of holy intentions of loyalty and love of God. Only in this way will the application of technique be the source of real and lasting spiritual progress, without which there is only disorder and confusion.

In your capacity as workers of the land and, therefore, of being closer to the great mystery of nature—which is an open book that speaks of the power of the Creator—you can understand these words, dictated by the concern We feel for your spiritual and material welfare.

Oh, the land, the land, what great lessons of life it can give! How edifying it is to think that God wished the first man to be surrounded by the peace of a garden, “to dress it and to keep it.”³ How beautiful it is to know that the holiest rites of the Church—We mean the sacraments—instituted by Jesus Christ, derive from the earth the noble matter that becomes the efficacious sign of grace—and behold in fact—the water of the holy baptismal font, the fragrance of bread, the perfume of wine, which the Lord used to make Himself more present on the altars and to communicate to men His own life. Behold the precious juice of the olive, also the humble instrument of grace! Behold also all the blessings with which the Church accompanies with maternal concern the growth of the fruits of the earth and the acts that prepare this growth.

These great realities that are so close to your life can be understood by you in a special way and make your love and esteem of heavenly things easier and more spontaneous. And this is the meaning of the joyful Easter announcement, repeated ceaselessly during these days:

“If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”⁴

Beloved sons and daughters! What could you expect of more joyful and encouraging nature from Our words?

³ *Gen.* 2,15.

⁴ *Col.* 3,1-3.

Continue on the line of faithfulness to Christ and to the Church that has been transmitted to you like a shining heredity of those people who preceded you and on which your organization is based.

May this faithfulness inspire your certain advance along the road toward a progress always more in line with your dignity as men and as workers. May you preserve it from the dangers of theoretical and practical materialism. May it sustain you in toils and in trials while you patiently await better times.

These are the instructions We give to you, private farmers, in whose hands rests the promise of a serene future for the Church and for the fatherland. This is the invitation We make to you, mothers of families, rural women who, with the sweetness of persuasion, with grace and with patience, can do so much to inspire spiritually the technical and economic progress of rural areas. This is the password that We entrust to you, young men, so that the search for fairer conditions of living may be ennobled always by sound and strong religious and moral convictions.

We raise to the Lord a prayer for all of you, for your families, for the work you do, so that the joy of the Lord may always sing in your heart. And in pledge of heavenly and earthly gifts, which We invoke abundantly on you, We are happy to accompany you with Our comforting apostolic blessing, which We also wish to extend to those people dear to you.

Following is a translation of an address by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII given on November 10, 1959 in the Consistory Hall at Rome to delegates to the biennial Food and Agriculture Organization conference.

It was your desire to stop the work of your tenth General Conference in order to come here to seek the encouragement and the blessing of the Pope. We are happy to receive you, for the FAO, as you know, is not a stranger to the Vatican. The members of your preceding sessions were received more than once in audience by Our predecessor, Pope Pius XII, of venerable memory, who always showed them affectionate benevolence. We have often passed near the large building which shelters the FAO, and while We looked at the innumerable lighted windows in the night, We transmitted a thought of gratitude to those who were working here for the welfare of humanity. And now We see the home of your organization raising its imposing mass upon the horizon before Our apartment. In this manner, as you see, you are quite near to Our mind and heart.

We want to tell you that the Church is taking a lively interest in the FAO. What a fine and beautiful sight you offer to Its maternal view, with your technicians working throughout the entire world to organize the struggle against hunger, "to work for the improvement of land, of plantations, of animal species, of fishing techniques, of dairy economy, of forest exploitation and all that in order to aid the most unfortunate of Our brothers, the most disinherited, those who suffer and those who are hungry . . ." in truth a great and marvelous sight which inspires admiration, edification and confidence in the future.

You know that We like to exhort the pilgrims who come to see Us to accomplish in the material field, as well as in the spiritual one, actions dictated by the love of God and of one's fellow man, called after the ecclesiastical tradition "works of mercy." But what is all the activity of the FAO if it is not an immense work of mercy? A work of mercy on a world-wide scale! We hardly need to exhort you, for the lesson you are

giving to the world is of itself so eloquent. We wish rather to rejoice with you, to congratulate you sincerely, to assure you that We bless your work.

First of all We rejoice sincerely and We thank God that an enterprise like the "Food and Agriculture Organization" was able to come to life, to be organized, to be developed following the horrible conflict which brought bloodshed upon the world. Without doubt one of the most remarkable and fortunate deeds of the post-war years was that attitude of conscience on the part of the responsible authorities realizing the great difference of levels of life among the nations, of the economic misery of those less favored—the underdeveloped nations as they have been called—in relation to those which possess the principal sources of wealth. That was the source, in noble souls preoccupied with human welfare, of a burst of devotion, a desire for effective service and then a great movement towards study, investigation, exchange of information, dispatch of techniques . . . coming finally to the beneficent work of the FAO in these last years, illustrated so well in the brochure which you have given Us: "The FAO at Work." What beautiful and good energy has been placed intelligently at the service of good! Allow Us to congratulate you upon it sincerely.

We like to emphasize one aspect which seems to Us to accompany these fine activities; that is the wisely realistic and at the same time serenely optimistic atmosphere which infuses your organization. The FAO is not afraid of difficulties: it faces up to them. It has not been discouraged by the number or extent of the obstacles which arose along its road: the ruins and devastations caused by war, the widespread suffering in certain areas, the epidemics favored by undernourishment and rendering it more serious . . . without speaking of the constant problems caused by the steady growth of world population. It has wisely given advice on the most effective ways to guarantee, perfect and economically distribute foodstuffs, and has placed its services at the disposition of the interested governments. The Church thinks highly of this spirit of positive action, of disinterested service; It praises this reasonable courage, this confidence in the possibility of solving the great human problems. It too is optimistic.

A valuable result of your activity—and We know that it is also one of the objectives of your organization—will be, in the long run, the raising of the standard of living of the rural inhabitants. Having come Ourselves from a rural home, We saw with Our own eyes during the years of Our youth, and We shall never forget, the toil and fatigue of those who till the soil. What a beautiful work of mercy it is to aid in lightening their burden and in giving a little more well-being to those who supply bread to the rest of the world! How worthy it is of encouragement and praise!

We should like to add one more thought which came to Us while We were meditating on the really great and comforting perspectives which the results already attained by your organization open to the mind. In a world again shaken by war and its consequences, humanity seeks with anxiety for that direction from which true peace will finally come for those who are most capable of creating it effectively. The lights coming from the direction of the political contest are still so uncertain, so likely to go out after having given rise to great hopes! On the other hand, those who promote the exercise of charity from country to country, assistance of an economic nature, in a spirit of disinterestedness and of friendly benevolence, are they not also the ones who mark most surely the paths towards unity and peace among men?

May you too, Gentlemen, in pursuing your fine activities, also work for the peace of the world! In taking leave of you, We believe that We cannot express better a wish that corresponds to your desires, and is surely identical in any case with the will of God, the Creator and Saviour of men. In order to better insure its fulfillment, We wholeheartedly extend to you Our paternal Apostolic Benediction.

Following is a translation of an address delivered by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII on April 22, 1959, to participants in the Thirteenth Congress of the Italian National Confederation of Independent Farmers.

We experience great joy in addressing to you Our paternal welcome and blessing, dear sons and daughters of the Italian National Confederation of Independent Farmers, who in these days celebrate the 13th national congress, and the sixth congress of the Groups of Rural Women and Young Farmers.

In looking upon your great number, in seeing you as it were one by one, we contemplate once more the serene face, though stamped with much weariness, of the good people of the fields with whom We have been familiar since childhood.

Our thought returns today with particular force to that rural world, full of memories and sweet impressions—providentially the first that We had. And your presence here bears for Us the full significance of good things and of dear people. But Our satisfaction today has still another reason. This is the first time since the Lord chose to call Us to the responsibilities of the Supreme Pontificate that We Ourselves meet with you in an audience reserved especially for you.

In this first meeting, Our pleasure goes out through you to all the thousands of independent farmers, who in more than 13,000 district sections of the confederation give an example of unity and good will. In you the Pope sees and embraces all the farmers of the beautiful and fruitful countryside of Italy, who today are spiritually present here with you.

Next October your well-deserving confederation will count fifteen years of existence. What a magnificent road it has traveled in such a short time! How many peaceful and informative declarations has it brought out each year, all directed toward the more complete protection of your work, for your technical instruction, for your needs, even the domestic ones, for your future itself, supported in all these activities by your always warm cooperation.

Looking back over your annals, especially in reading the wise discourses given you by Our Predecessor Pius XII, who held you all so dear, one has the clear documentation of the stages covered with sure steps, and of the hope which the Holy Church has placed and places in you. In such a manner even in your field, are proven true the incisive words of "*Rerum Novarum*," in which Leo XIII encouraged the formation of Christian associations of workers.

There is also before you the approbation which Pius XI gave to the associations, arising from the invitation, for having formed "workers sincerely Christian, who knew well how to combine the diligent practice of their fields of work with the healthy precepts of religion, and how to defend with efficacy and firmness proper interests and temporal rights, but observing due reverence for justice, and the sincere intention to cooperate with the other classes of society for the Christian renewal of the whole of the social life."¹

Therefore, above all there arises (the need for) the devout thanking of God for the continual help with which He has chosen to bless your confederation, making it today one of the useful and beneficial forces at the service of individuals and of the national life.

Moreover, new problems always present themselves for your attention and they require intelligence, perseverance and precision if they are to be solved. Your congress assumes this year particular importance because of the magnitude and urgency of the questions under consideration, particularly that connected with the forthcoming and active entrance into the Common European Market, along with the complex questions that it entails, which require ordered adjustment to the new requirements so that one will be prepared for the evolution which is already under way.

Also of profound significance for you is the study of a better balance between the income from your property and the weight of state taxes; problems which We hope would be resolved according to the farsighted counsels of Christian social teaching and in respect to the existing agricultural situation.

¹ Lett. Enc. "*Quadragesimo Anno*" A.A.S. XXIII (1931) P. 187.

Also, the major concerns of the two national congresses of the Groups of Rural Women and of the Young Farmers have great human and Christian value.

We do not intend to enter into a lively (discussion) of these problems. Yet yielding to that sentiment which We feel so deeply in Our heart for you, We wish to offer you several thoughts, which, with the help of God, may be able to make clear the pursuit of your mission.

Beloved sons and daughters!

We say to you in the first place: Love the earth. This is the sweet and strong link, beyond that of the family, which binds you closely to your places of birth or of work and which contains so many memories which one hands down like a holy inheritance from one generation to another. But it is true that cultivating it (the earth), in consequence of original sin, involves fatigue and pain, as does every activity depending on human strength. It is also true that the return she gives is now and then unequal to the work put in, forcing one often to search in the city for an existence with more immediate economic advantages, although they are not always secure.

While, therefore, we trust that by means of continued study of the rural problems, and with the generous good will of all whose duty it is to provide immediate solutions, one may overcome the daily difficulties, we nevertheless say to you: Love the earth, a generous and severe mother who holds in her womb the treasures of Providence. Love her, particularly today, when a dangerous frame of mind is spreading and enveloping the most sacred values of man, that you may find in it the serene framework for the development and safeguard of your complete personality; love it because through your contact with it, through the nobility of your work, it will be easier for you to improve your mind and raise it to God.

This love does not, however, mean a placid and improvident preserving of ancient methods, no longer in line with the new demands. It means a study and application of the new processes of farming and of work in the constant rhythm of continued progress. In regard to such an idea, We find the theme of the meeting of the youth groups very opportune,

which seeks to "underscore the power of the young to insure that the farms have ample energies and that they will progress." The words of the motto "Try, Produce, Progress," are very appropriate. The motto is offered to the goodwill of the better prepared young men to spur them on to find in their land the reasons for loving it always more, as the scientist loves his precision instruments and continually perfects them for new and beneficial conquests.

If Our invitation to love the land is addressed to all farmers, in a special way it is addressed to the youth, to whose strong hands, to whose ready intelligence and to whose enterprising spirit are entrusted the continuity and progress of rural life and therefore also of the whole national life.

Love the family! This is the second thought We offer you. Without this love there would not be the full significance of what We have just told you. The love of the earth can only be understood and appreciated as part of the love for one's own family in which lies the secret of the integrity and the strength of each nation. The exodus from the land wounds the rural family as a direct consequence, sometimes bringing a mentality and habits which are harmful to family institutions.

What a fine spectacle is, instead, offered by the contemplation of the marvelous picture of innumerable families, the jealous custodians of the most genuine and strictly Christian virtues, where the father is the firm and sure guide, the example of honesty, of hard work, of sacrifice; where the mother, like an industrious bee, in silence accomplishes and is sustained by the trust of God in the hard task of educator and worker; where the bold young people, more open and frank because of their contact with nature and (thus) more protected against dangers, grow pure and strong, the hope and consolation of their parents; where the little ones "like olive plants around your table" ² bring joy to the home, bringing with them the blessings of the Lord. It is not an imaginary picture which we have drawn, instead it is a reality and, thanks to God, it still lives. Of many proofs of this We Ourselves are the grateful and emotionally stirred witness.

² Psalm 127, 3.

Therefore, love the family! We address Ourselves particularly to the rural women, whose congress dealt with so many delicate problems. The desired improvement of working conditions and of income, the effort for spiritual and cultural betterment, must be aimed here solely for the perfect realization of family life. Therefore, may your glory and your holy ambition be to have a healthy, honest and hardworking family that may be an example by its spirit of piety and of kindness (to all) as well as by its happy harmony tempered by trials, through which practical collaboration in the effort of attaining a higher standard of life is easier.

For Our last thought We say to you: Love the Church! Throughout the centuries, she has always found among the people of the land the sound and capable material with which she has formed the greater part of her priests and of her saints. In recent centuries, with the dimming of the splendor of the Faith and of "feeling with the Church," esteem for the high gift of ecclesiastical and religious vocations has been lost in other social classes while the contribution of the land to the order of the priesthood has been and is irreplaceable. In the same way, as an obvious consequence, great has been the number of saints chosen by the Lord from rural families, like the most perfumed flowers. We would not have enough time to number them all. It suffices Us to recall, due to circumstances which touch Us closely, the saintly Curé of Ars, the centenary of whose death is celebrated this year; Don Bosco, to whom a church here in Rome is to be dedicated shortly; and St. Pius X, temporarily transported in the midst of jubilation of praying crowds to his beloved Venice.

Therefore, preserve unchanged this precious heritage of the spirit of religion which is your greatest treasure! Love the Church, her bishops and her priests. Be an active member of it, participating with profound and joyous awareness in its life. Be an example in all of the manifestations of parish life. Nourish always the desire to know better the maternal teaching of the Church, which can give you a reassuring answer to your questions. Be fervent supporters of her social doctrine, from which you can derive clear light and norms.

Beloved sons and daughters!

If there lives in you the love of the land, the family, the Church, the greatest peace will fill your hearts and the blessings of the Lord will descend abundantly on you, in the same way that the beneficial morning dew restores your fields, and your flowers enhance it. We invoke this outpouring of heavenly gifts on your activities, on your hopes, on the toil of your daily life. And in pledge of it, We impart to you, to your distant families, and with special tenderness to your children and your old folks, as well as to the leaders and associates of your confederation and to those people linked with you by work and by friendship, Our paternal and comforting Apostolic Blessing.

