

Text of Pope's Letter on Bombing

JUL 22 1943

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WASHINGTON, July 22.—The text of the Pope's letter to Francesco Cardinal Marchetti-Selvaggiani, Vicar General of Rome, on the bombing of Rome, as received here by radio from the Vatican:

To you who so intimately share our government and pastoral care for this diocese of Rome, center and head of the Catholic world and Christian thought and faith, we wish to address our mind in an hour of particular bitterness in which our soul is immersed.

You know well how the sad spectacle of multiplying havoc and ruin—the painful primacy of the present war—hanging over unarmed and innocent populations has moved us from the very beginning of war to attempt every means that notwithstanding the conflict of arms, the sentiments and dictates of humanity should not remain completely overwhelmed and suffocated by passion.

Refers to Messages.

Therefore in our messages to all faithful we recalled to belligerents, no matter on what side they were fighting, that if they wished to hold high the dignity of their nations and the honor of their arms, they should respect the safety of peaceful citizens and the monuments of faith and civilization.

Consider—we sought to tell them—what a severe judgment future generations will pass upon those who destroy what ought to be jealously protected as the riches and pride of all humanity and of the progress of peoples. Consider that hate has never been the father of peace and that resentment arising from vast and unnecessary destruction causes to arise later less stable and less serene the day of peaceful union which cannot consist in humiliation of the conquered, but rests and is consolidated only in brotherly concord pacifying the minds of men and moderating the passions of rancor.

Strived to Save Rome.

As Bishop of the city, we have striven to save the city, to follow the path of peace and to avoid the horrors and harm of bombardments.

Without recalling to mind the immense historical importance of the ancient city, for us Rome is the Holy City of Catholicism risen and shining with dazzling glory in the name of Christ, rich in marvelous monuments of religion and art, guardian of the most precious documents and relics; Rome, in whose catacombs in the time of fiercest persecutions were the first refuges of the Christian people and of martyrs who rendered sacred the amphitheaters and circuses, to whose burial places people descend to pray today as they did in the very cradle of Christianity; Rome, in whose territory are scattered the various organs of the Roman Curia, numerous institutes and pontifical undertakings, international societies and colleges under our dependence; so many sanctuaries without mentioning our patriarchal basilicas, so many libraries and works of the most famous artistic geniuses; Rome, to whom people in such large numbers come to learn, not only the faith, but also the ancient wisdom and regard as a light-house of civilization founded upon Christian virtue.

Exposed to Danger.

But besides, almost in the center of the city—and therefore exposed to danger of aerial attack—is our Vatican City, independent and neutral state which guards priceless treasures of faith and art, sacred patrimony, not only of the Apostolic See, but of the entire Catholic world.

All this we have clearly and repeatedly made apparent in recommending the safety of Rome to those to whom it was a duty to safeguard it in the name of human

dignity and Christian civilization.

It seemed permitted to us to hope that the weight of such evident arguments, the authority with which we are unworthily invested, the common acknowledgment of our superior impartiality and the widespread constant and beneficent activity which we have undertaken for the good of all, without distinction of nationality or religious affiliation, would have obtained for us, among so many bitter experiences, the comfort of finding among both contending belligerents a favorable reception to our intercession on behalf of Rome.

Proved a Disappointment.

Unfortunately, however, this, our most reasonable hope, has proved a disappointment.

And now the very thing we deprecated has happened; the very thing which we feared and foresaw has become sad reality because one of the most noted of Roman basilicas, the San Lorenzo Outside-the-Walls, held sacred by all Catholics for its ancient traditions and for the magnificent tomb of our venerated predecessor, Pius XI, is now almost completely destroyed.

In contemplating the ruins of this monumental basilica there came to our mind the words of the Prophet Jeremias (Jeremias IV, 1). The sorrowful experience of these acts proves once again that despite the precautions which may be taken it is almost impossible to avoid on this sacred soil of Rome the destruction of venerated edifices.

'We Deem It Our Duty.'

Therefore, we deem it our duty once more to raise our voice in defense of the priceless treasures that constitute the ornament of human and Christian grandeur, and also because it is our sacred intention, according to the promptings of our heart, to safeguard and protect, in view of the opinion of all right-thinking people and of the judgment of future generations, the deposit which we have been entrusted to protect and to transmit.

Even though our words come from a wounded heart, they are intended, not as a spur to resentment and hatred, but, as we earnestly hope, as an insistent and efficacious recall to a sense of lofty comprehension of the sacred destiny of Rome, no less than to humanity and to Christian charity.

'Show Proof of Faith.'

To our beloved flock of Rome, so severely tried and whose pitiful conditions we were able to see with our own eyes in the midst of recent ruins, we tried to bring immediate and all possible relief with the means at our disposal. To them we now say, show forth today more than ever before the ardor and proof of that faith for which the Apostles of Gentiles gave praise to your forbears.

May Christian resignation make your sorrow and privation meritorious. May this misfortune incite you to purify your souls, to expiate your faults and to return to draw more closely to our Lord.

All of our children who look to Rome and to the Vicar of Christ, who, as Bishop, is their special and affectionate father wherever they may be, and in particular to all those whose experience of personal sorrow and that of others has made them more compassionate toward the manifold human miseries, we urgently invite them with paternal insistence to pray the Lord that he may hasten the hour of His mercy, when the weapons of war are laid down and tranquility of the soul reigns once more, that then the light and joy of true peace may return once more and shine resplendent on the troubled world.

With this hope in our heart, we impart to Your Eminence and to our beloved clergy and people of Rome the Apostolic Benediction.