

## The Pope Speaks

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*The present article is one of a series on Catholic reference books and periodicals of use to lawyers.*

# The Pope Speaks

MARTIN F. CONNOR\*

**A**BOUT THE YEAR 64 A.D. the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, faithful to the mandate of Christ, "Feed my lambs . . . feed my sheep," addressed himself in a letter to the Church in Asia Minor. Since that date the Roman Pontiffs have continued to instruct, exhort, admonish, and congratulate the faithful in messages which have gone to peoples far removed from Rome.

The faithful, on their part, have heeded those other words of Jesus to His disciples, "He who hears you, hears me," and have through the ages turned to the Papacy for words of wisdom, guidance, and inspiration.

No Pope, perhaps, has spoken more frequently than Pius XII. None, perhaps, reigned in a world which needed counsel so desperately. Never has there been a more urgent need for the faithful to hear the words of Christ as spoken by His Vicar.

In 1953 an American Catholic who wanted to ground his thought and direct his activity by the teachings of the Holy Father would have found the task a formidable one. English translations of his pronouncements were being published sporadically and by a variety of groups. They were of inconsistent quality and generally restricted to major documents, such as encyclicals. Other messages were available only in the resumes or excerpts provided by press releases. This made for an incredible void, of which few were even conscious.

In that year, 1953, two Catholic laymen in the city of Washington appraised the situation and looked about for a remedy. One was John

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O'Neil, an attorney and business man with a degree in Sacred Theology. The other was Frederick Dyer, author and educational specialist for the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Their discussions led to an "Initial Proposal" in which they formulated the problem and recommended as its solution an American journal of papal documents. This they sent to a number of churchmen, scholars and editors. The response was one of unanimous enthusiasm, and from the suggestions which they received they projected a quarterly magazine to be devoted exclusively to readable translations of papal messages. Its first issue appeared in April, 1954, under the title *THE POPE SPEAKS*.\*

In the preface to this issue were words which summarized the motives and intentions of the editors: "The burning desire of the Church in English-speaking countries to know more quickly and more fully the mind of the Holy Father is the circumstance which has called *THE POPE SPEAKS* into existence."

The magazine's inception evoked offers of co-operation from many quarters. The National Catholic Welfare Conference, the London Tablet, the Catholic Truth Society of England, all offered the use of their translations. A distinguished group of prelates, priests and scholars volunteered their assistance. In short order *THE POPE SPEAKS* became the concerted effort of a group, with assurance of stability and continuity.

In June of 1954 Archbishop Montini, then Pro-Secretary of State in the Vatican, wrote to the editors:

The Holy Father . . . would have me express to you His sincere appreciation and

\**THE POPE SPEAKS* is published at 3622 12th St., N.E., Washington, D.C. Subscription rates: \$5.00 per year; \$9.00, two years; \$13.00, three years.

cordial thankfulness for the sentiments of filial devotion and loving attachment to the Vicar of Christ which prompted this undertaking to make known ever more widely the teachings of the Supreme Pontiff.

"The Holy Father," said Archbishop A. G. Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, "ardently desires his messages to reach all his children. This new quarterly will make it possible for every family to have his words in their home, to read his teachings carefully, and to profit from them."

Today, *THE POPE SPEAKS* has its office in an unpretentious row house in Washington, D. C., a few blocks from the campus of the Catholic University of America. O'Neil has continued as editor, while Dyer has had to take a less active part. The magazine now requires the services of three fulltime employees.

Each day there arrives in this office an airmail copy of *L'Osservatore Romano*, Vatican City daily, which publishes all the messages of the Holy Father in the language in which they were delivered. These are excerpted and inquiry is made of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and others in order to determine whether an English version is being prepared elsewhere. If it is not, or will not be ready in time for publication in *THE POPE SPEAKS*, the text is sent to one of the magazine's own translators.

*THE POPE SPEAKS'* translators come from many walks of life. Two are rectors of seminaries; several are eminent theologians. Others are university professors and journalists. One, at least, is a housewife. They are called upon to work in many languages, Italian and French probably being encountered most frequently.

The first is used, of course, in addresses and letters to Italian audiences; the second is the language in which the Holy Father generally addresses an international gathering. But Pius XII speaks often also in Spanish, Portuguese, German and English. Latin is used in encyclicals, administrative pronouncements and some messages addressed to clerics and religious.

When a translation has been obtained, it is read carefully by the staff and given such revision as seems necessary. It is then submitted to a member of the Advisory Board, a group of distinguished prelates and priests, who must give final approval before the translation can be published.

This, of course, is the usual practice. In exceptional cases, a manuscript may be submitted for revision to three or four theologians and scholars before acceptance for publication.

THE POPE SPEAKS makes no extravagant claims for its translations. Pains are taken to see that they are free from substantial error, particularly in doctrinal matters. Some degree of literary excellence is at least aspired to. However, felicity of expression must sometimes yield before painstaking exactness, and the resounding periods of the Latin tongues at times defy the most valiant efforts to reduce them to English idiom. Then translators and editors alike console themselves with the thought that the convenience, availability and relative completeness of THE POPE SPEAKS are sufficient justification for its existence.

After translation there arises the problem of selection. In its early issues THE POPE SPEAKS was able to publish every message which was given in the course of a quarter. At times sufficient space remained for pub-

lication of messages from the past. But the volume of papal messages delivered in the past year overwhelmed any hope of making completeness a matter of consistent policy. For instance, in the three month period covered by the Autumn 1956 issue, Pius XII delivered almost seventy messages. Only ten of these could be printed in full. Two others were given in substantial fullness, while the rest were represented by excerpts or merely mentioned. (It should be remarked, however, that one third of this issue was devoted to the lengthy Encyclical on the Sacred Heart.)

Papal messages assume a variety of forms. The most common is the *allocution* or address to visiting dignitaries, to delegates, to congresses, or to pilgrims. In 1956, for example, Pius XII addressed international gatherings on subjects as varied as corneal transplantation, the human problems involved in the treatment of cancer, the relation of positive law to medical morals, the problems incident to man's entry into outer space, the nature of Christian culture, the moral dilemmas of the publisher, the role of the Christian in government. And these, of course, are only random samples.

Groups greeted in audiences ranged from the cadets of the French military academy to the hotel doormen of Rome, from Belgian schoolboys to American surgeons, from the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Holy Cross to a soccer team from Barcelona.

Other pronouncements are more formal. The most solemn is the *Apostolic Bull*, employed only on the most important occasions. It is on dark parchment to which a leaden seal is attached by silk or hemp laces. An *Apostolic Brief* is less formal,

it being written on white parchment and sealed with the Pope's signet ring.

*Apostolic letter* is a general term designating an administrative act of the Apostolic See. An instance of this is the Holy Father's message to the persecuted Church in eastern Europe, which appeared in the Winter 1957 issue of *THE POPE SPEAKS*. A *Constitution* is a Bull in which the Pope teaches, defines, or promulgates laws. One was issued last spring, entitled *Sedes Sapientiae*, on the training of seminarians in religious orders. It also appeared in the Winter 1957 issue.

An *Encyclical* is a letter in which the Pope instructs and explains doctrine as a teacher and father rather than as a law-giver. If it is addressed to the whole Church it is called an Encyclical Letter. If it is directed to the Church in a particular locality, it is called an Encyclical Epistle. Encyclical Letters are the form of papal message with which people are probably best acquainted. Pius XII issued a number of them in 1956: On Devotion to the Sacred Heart; On Sacred Music; and three asking prayers for peace and freedom in eastern Europe. All of these appeared in *THE POPE SPEAKS*.

This panorama of a few of the forms papal messages can take illustrates the astounding scope and range of their subject matter. The most frequent reaction evoked by a cursory glance through the contents of a copy of *THE POPE SPEAKS* is astonishment at the universality of the Pope's message. No human problem seems

too trivial for his attention or too vast for his comprehension. He warrants well the title Common Father.

In undertaking *THE POPE SPEAKS* it was hoped that the publication would be of value to the scholar, educator, or preacher, and that it would prove a useful reference work for all who would have recourse to the writing of the Holy Father.

With this in view, a Guide is included in each issue. This section lists and identifies relatively all papal communications of the quarter and gives such bibliographic data as is available by the date of publication. "Key topics" are also given for each message, a feature whose source will be recognized by anyone familiar with legal digests. This information is supplemented at the end of each year by a topical index.

It is also hoped that in time the office of *THE POPE SPEAKS* may be able to establish itself as a clearinghouse through which scholarly projects on papal thought may be coordinated, and as an information center for all with inquiries on the subject. English translations of all papal messages are kept on file, whether intended for publication or not. A library of documents antedating the magazine's inception is being organized. This project is still more a dream than a reality, but so was the magazine itself in 1953.

This then, in brief, is the story of the magazine, *THE POPE SPEAKS*. A national Catholic weekly hailed its first issue as "a godsend." May it be this literally for thousands of Americans for many years to come.