

The Law Student

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THE LAW STUDENT[†]

AMID THE HEAVY and really extraordinary schedule of these days, involving many audiences and commemorative ceremonies, We have made a special effort to find these few minutes to spend with you, dearly beloved sons. This fact expresses better than any words can, Our desire to receive you, to accept your greetings, to say a few words to you; and We do not want to let the opportunity pass of bestowing upon you Our paternal blessing.

To Youth the Future

You are the youth, the one genuine promise of a better future possessed by a troubled and uncertain world, whose problems and needs We have been eager to study thoroughly, so that We might be able to help it as much as possible.

You are young men with a university training. Ordinarily that means you have been chosen to be, in that mysterious tomorrow, leaders charged not only with giving the future its tone, but also its direction and impetus.

Finally, you are Spanish university men, the future leaders of a nation dearly cherished by Us because of its unflinching loyalty to the Faith and to this Chair of Peter. Particularly in the realm of spiritual values, your people represent an inexhaustible fountain of resources for mankind, one from which We expect so much, especially when We take into consideration that other part of the world which shares your language.

The Lawyer's Ministry

But there is still more: We have been told that most of you have devoted these fresh years of your youth to the study of Law—some of your illustrious teachers are present here—and that you are making this pilgrimage to culminate your studies, before beginning your professional

[†]An Address by Pope Pius XII to a Group of Spanish Law Students, delivered March 21, 1956. Reprinted with permission from *THE POPE SPEAKS*, Spring-Summer, 1956, p. 95.

career. May God bless you, beloved sons, in all your undertakings, but always remember that you are embarking on a career that requires a true vocation. One should never start out on it if he does not possess knowledge of the good and the just, that *ars boni et aequi*, mentioned in the *Digest* (Book I, Part 1, Law 1).

You will have to travel slowly along your chosen path in order to acquire the experience necessary to teach you how to use in practical life the abstract principles contained in the legal texts and scientific works you have studied. It is a career that demands continuing application and study, for it will impose responsibilities on you by which you will be obligated in conscience, and of which some day you will be required to account before the tribunal of the Eternal Judge.

Your vocation to the practice of the Law will require of you spiritual integrity and moral uprightness, so that your profession will not be merely an instrument for acquiring wealth or influence, but a kind of priesthood (*l.c.*) dedicated to the ideals of the good and the just, although at times it will be easier and more materially rewarding to stray into the path of corruption and untruth.

It is a vocation, finally, in which you can never for a moment lose sight of the universal rule of human conduct which is the moral law, beyond whose limits you must never trespass.

One Truth, One Way, One Life

If you wish a single recommendation which might summarize all We are seeking to convey to you, We will tell you that over and beyond all of the studies in your specialized fields of concentration, you should attempt to cultivate and form your minds

in the spirit of that eternal Truth which is the foundation of all Law and of all Justice. As the great Doctor and Bishop of Hippo so truly observed: "*Ubinam sunt istae regulae scriptae, ubi quid sit justum et iniustus agnoscit . . . ? Ubi ergo scriptae sunt, nisi in libro lucis illius, quae veritas dicitur?*" "Where else then are these laws written down, in which even the unjust man may discover what justice is . . . ? Where but in the book of that light which is called the Truth?" (St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book XIV, Chapter 15—Migne PL. t. 42, col. 1052).

From this august office to which, despite Our own unworthiness, the infinite goodness of Our Savior has desired Us to be elevated, We glance back over life like a traveler who, having scaled a summit, sees, laid out plainly before him, all the road that he has traveled. It seems to Us that We perceive more plainly every day that there is but one Truth worth searching for, only one North Star which shows the right way, and that this Truth is the "*Rex et centrum omnium cordium.*" For He was able to say of Himself "*Ego sum via et veritas et vita*" (John 14, 6) as though He wished to exhort all: "I am the only Path for those who do not wish to get lost and perish; I am the only Truth for those who do not wish to err and go astray: I am the only Life for those who do not wish to languish and to die. . . ."

Take with you then for yourselves and for all those who are your classmates today and will be your colleagues tomorrow, Our love and Our Benediction. Take with you this exhortation to devote yourselves to study, to cultivate a spirit of serenity, to have faith in the future, to love justice and peace. . . .