

L É O N H A R M E L

Letters and Speeches

Paris, Maison de la Bonne Presse (*Les Questions actuelles*) ; Lyon, *Bulletin
des Facultés catholiques* ; Fribourg, *Congrès des œuvres eucharistiques*

1884-1904

THIS EDITION

This is an English translation of the original French text, made for the website leonharmel.com in 2026. It follows the original sentence by sentence, without cuts or additions.

The original collection brings together ten texts by Léon Harmel, speeches, letters and addresses to the popes, published in *Les Questions actuelles*, the *Bulletin des Facultés catholiques de Lyon* and the proceedings of the *Congrès des œuvres eucharistiques de Fribourg* (1884-1904), translated here in full from their first publication. It has been typeset in the spirit of the original: title pages and headings follow the layout of the original publication.

The numbered notes are those of the original work; here they are numbered continuously from beginning to end.

Léon Harmel, le Bon Père du Val-des-Bois

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Version of 4 October 2026.

PLAN FOR THE FOUNDING OF A SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL STUDIES

*Lille, general meeting of the Catholic committees of the Nord, 1884.
Bulletin des Facultés catholiques de Lyon, March 1885, p. 35-39*

At the general meeting of the Catholic committees of the Nord, a Christian industrialist, Mr Léon Harmel, delivered, in the presence of His Excellency Mgr Langénieux, Archbishop of Reims, and of four other Prelates, around whom the elite of local society had gathered, a speech that we believe we should reproduce for several reasons: first, because the ideas put forward by the eloquent speaker are among those whose spread ought to be encouraged; next, because these ideas were presented under the patronage of the Catholic Faculties of Lille; and finally because it might perhaps be possible to attempt, in our region¹, and by means of our dear Faculties of Lyon, the realisation of a programme whose execution would render the very greatest services to the employers and workers of our area. Here, then, are the terms in which Mr Harmel explained himself on the *Plan for the Founding of a School of Advanced Industrial and Commercial Studies*:

“Your Excellency,

“My Lords,

“Gentlemen,

“I have come to make a request of the Catholic University: it is a keen desire that has long been in my heart. I lay it first of all at the feet of Your Excellency, whose presence here today I am so happy to

1. Between Flanders and the Lyonnais there are many similarities from the industrial and commercial point of view. It is well known that, at the very gates of Lyon, opens the valley of the Gier (in Latin *Giarium*, whence *Jarez*, which is now wrongly written *Jarret*), whose coalfield, iron and steel works and ribbon and lace factories employ a very considerable number of workers and make the wealth of the district.

greet, for you are my beloved Father, and from the tenderness you lavish on me every day I may believe that I am your well-beloved son.

“I have come to ask the Catholic University of Lille to create a School of Advanced Industrial and Commercial Studies attached to the Catholic Faculties (*applause*), and I wish to say a word to you about the need to create it, about its future fruitfulness and about how easily it can be achieved. (*Renewed applause.*)

“Count de Caulaincourt, in the eloquent speech he gave yesterday, told us that each assembly of the Catholics of the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais had seen a work, a new foundation, come into being. I have full and entire faith that the one to be made in 1884 will be no less fruitful and no less useful than those that went before it; for it is a foundation that will meet no competition either in the institutions of the State or in any other similar establishment.

“Indeed, gentlemen, people have thought of doctors, of lawyers, of magistrates, of teachers: no one has ever given a thought to the sons of employers. And every day, in the Industrial Commission of the Association of Catholic Workers’ Circles, of which I have the honour to be a member and which counts more than a thousand members in France, we receive letters from industrialists asking our advice on the education of their sons who are destined to become employers. What means do you offer us, what school do you recommend, so that our sons may pursue there the special studies that their future position will require? And in truth we are very hard put to answer. For even in the government schools — with every reservation made for the little sympathy they inspire in us —, we do not find the courses we would like to recommend. The École Centrale and others demand, for admission, formidable quantities of mathematics, for which our children are not prepared, and they tend rather to produce scholars than heads of mills.

“In these conditions, most industrialists take the best course there is to take, although it is not perfect: they make their sons go through

every stage of the work, either in their own mill or in another firm's mill. But this means, I repeat, is far from perfect and offers little security: it runs the risk of keeping up[?] a fatal routine in industries that are handed down in this way, and such training can do nothing to raise the young man's intellectual level.

“Will our programme, the programme of the courses that we are asking the Catholic Faculties to organise, be a complicated one? No, gentlemen. To fulfil the duties of the head of a mill, there is no need to go as far as the integral calculus. We ask for commercial arithmetic; bookkeeping, which allows the employer to manage his affairs in an orderly way; physics, in its applications to steam engines, to electricity, to the transmission of power; chemistry, which is becoming more and more necessary today for the study of textile and other materials; and finally a little civil engineering, some architecture, and a great deal of drawing. So much for the scientific part. To it we add the elements of commercial and administrative law, of political and Christian economy — the only kind that is not taught — (*applause*), foreign languages and commercial geography. That, it seems to me, is the outline of a fairly complete programme.

“I said a moment ago that this would be a fruitful foundation, and I will explain what I mean. It would be so first of all for the University itself, for the University, by creating this industrial course, would enter upon an entirely new path and would prepare for itself the most legitimate successes. The University of Lille must be the head and the summit of the formation of the educated and rightly ruling classes of Catholic society. (*Applause.*)

Now it cannot possibly reach its goal if it neglects this important element: the head of the mill. (*Assent.*)

The fruitfulness of this foundation will be no less great for our children. First of all, you will raise their intellectual level by giving them a little of that higher education which every intelligent man needs; next, you will develop in them the ability to communicate their

ideas, whether by letter or by speech; you will prepare them to take part in deliberative assemblies, where they may be called to sit on committees and keep the minutes, or in the courts to draw up the judgments.

You see, gentlemen, there will be in this a considerable help and benefit for our children, and I have the right to say that in this respect the foundation will be marvellously fruitful. And finally, gentlemen, the last part of this fruitfulness, the most important, the one that is the object of our hopes and our desires, is the fruitfulness this foundation will show for the restoration of the social reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Loud applause.*)

For a long time we have been working, or seeming to work, in vain to transform the mill, which today is a tool of hell and an instrument of Satan, into an instrument of sanctification. God knows, however, that we have spared neither pains nor efforts to make the truth prevail, to make it shine before all eyes, and that serious teaching has been given to mill owners from this very place. Before the judgement of God, they will not be able to plead that the truth was not set before them and that they were unable to make their mills Christian. We come up against ill will, even among the best employers, who tell us:

“What you ask, we cannot carry out; it is impossible!”

That is the task to which we devote ourselves and which we mean to accomplish: first, to make the truth known; and, believe me, that is hard to achieve with men who wish neither to hear it nor to know it; secondly, to make it understood; thirdly, to make it accepted; fourthly, to make it loved; and fifthly, to have it applied. We have been at this ceaseless work for years, and we do not know when our task will be finished.

On the other hand, when in your school our children have learned to know the truth, when they have accepted it and loved it before becoming industrialists, then, once they are heads of mills, they will know how to apply it, they will know how to make the mill an instru-

ment in keeping with the plans of God, who said: “Go, cultivate the earth and subdue it.” (*Applause.*)

The mill is a work of Providence. If it has become a means of perdition, if it is in the power of hell, it is because employers have not kept pace with science, because matter is more advanced than the minds and hearts of employers. (*Renewed applause.*)

Our young men will learn, in this professional school of advanced industrial and commercial studies, that they have duties to fulfil as employers, that they have the charge of souls, and that this is not merely an optional duty which they may set aside, but a strict obligation on which they will be judged; they will learn that this obligation, despite certain self-interested protests, calls for neither a sacrifice of time nor a sacrifice of money for its fulfilment, but for the love of God, that love which kindles in hearts the flame of love for souls. (*Hear, hear!*)

Finally, gentlemen, this foundation will be very easy to carry out. It requires no staff, since the subjects we have listed are all already taught by the staff of the University: one single man will be needed to gather all these goodwills together and bind them into one.

As regards money, — an important question when a new organisation is concerned, — you should not find yourselves in difficulty. You are dealing with the well-to-do classes, who will be able to pay for the teaching given to their children.

There is therefore no way of refusing us what we ask, and we fully hope that we shall obtain satisfaction. The wish we are expressing has long been kept in our hearts; but until now we have not dared to express it at a public session, because minds did not seem to us to be prepared. Today we are happy to lay it at the feet of Their Lordships the Bishops and to commend it to their high benevolence.

Allow me to say, Your Excellency, how happy I am that you are presiding over this congress, and that you have honoured with your presence the solemn session of the Catholic Faculties of Lille, where

this institution to which we attach so much value is at last to be founded.

It was recalled yesterday that you were the Bishop of Our Lady of Lourdes; let me recall that you are the Archbishop of Our Lady of the Factory (Notre-Dame de l'Usine). It was you who had the glory of placing on the head of this immortal queen a new crown, which made her queen of a kingdom that was thought to be the kingdom of Satan, and which, thanks to Mary Immaculate, is going to become the kingdom of God! (*Applause.*)

It was therefore for you to preside over this assembly, and Our Lady of the Factory will dispose hearts favourably towards the work we are placing under her patronage. It is she whom I thank first of all. Next I thank you, my Lords, and I thank the University of Lille, because I believe my case is won in advance...

Mgr Langénieux. — Certainly.

Mr Harmel. — I thank you for this foundation, which will contribute so powerfully to the Christian recovery of France, which is impossible without the Christian transformation of the mill. (*Loud applause.*)

THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN THE FACTORY

Speech at the Eucharistic Congress of Fribourg, September 1885. Comptes rendus du Congrès, p. 668-682

He has just shown us the hopes that the Eucharistic congresses should inspire in us. The speaker to whom I now give the floor is one of the men who prepare them best and who are already bringing them about: **Mr Léon Harmel.** (*Acclamation.*)

My Lords,
Gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to express my joy and my gratitude to God for being able to attend this magnificent congress, gathered under the auspices of the Bishops, who built Christian society as the bees build the hive. Sometimes the hornets seize the combs that were the fruit of long and heroic labours; but the bees do not lose heart, and they take up their work again. So the Bishops, in unrelenting labour, are rebuilding what schism, impiety and revolution have destroyed; and already we see the fulfilment of that famous prediction according to which the nineteenth century, which began with the proclamation of the rights of man, will end with the proclamation of the rights of Jesus Christ. (*Applause.*)

To you, my Lord Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva, allow me to express my very special feelings of love and respect; for your fatherhood does not extend only over this people who are happy to have you; it long ago crossed the borders into France, which acclaims you as the apostle of the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles. (*Applause.*)

Gentlemen, you ask me to speak to you this evening about the Eucharist in the factory. I am unworthy to treat so great a subject in an assembly where I see so many venerable and learned priests. But can the son plead his unworthiness when his father commands him to

speak? I ask only that my words pass through your hearts before reaching your ears, and so the factory in its turn will be able to sing the praises of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. (*Applause.*)

The Eucharist, in the factory as everywhere, is the way, the truth and the life. It is the way, and without it the complete reform of the world of labour is impossible. Without denying the need to reorganise society in order to resist the anarchy that is devouring the nations of today, without disputing the usefulness of institutions, which are as it were the embodiment of ideas, one may say that experience proves, through the very many but very human attempts and efforts made down the centuries, that human means have remained utterly fruitless in solving the social question. The reason is that this question is not only a question of the stomach; it is also a question of the heart's contentment. Now the heart of man is an abyss, and when one throws into this abyss nothing but the goods of the earth, pleasures and riches, one only digs it deeper. (*Applause.*) To fill it, one needs the sacred goods of faith, love and hope: one needs Jesus Christ whole and entire. (*Applause.*)

But let us come at once, gentlemen, to the facts, to practice, and first let us say a word about Val-des-Bois.

To those who do not know it, I will say that it lies at the gates of Reims, in a valley where the mills are crowded one on top of another, where there is always more work than there are workers, and where the faith has long been lost. You will have an accurate idea of the moral state of these people of Champagne when you learn that a priest from our neighbourhood told me only recently that months, and sometimes years, go by without his hearing a single confession.

The employer's influence could not reach these populations, torn from their native soil, flocking in from every side, and changing mills under the pressure of need or the wish to earn more, like the leaves of the woods that fly in every direction at the breath of the wind.

My father founded this mill in 1840. He had left the family mill, situated in the Ardennes, in thoroughly Catholic country, leaving its management to his brother. He did all he could to bring his new workers back to the good, but all his efforts remained powerless. Weary of these fruitless attempts, he tried association, without knowing what results it would give him. Noble efforts had already been made in this direction and crowned with success; but we did not yet know of them.

So he organised association at Val-des-Bois in 1860. Those who wish to see for themselves the marvellous results obtained, to go round the mill and study our organisation, will give us the greatest pleasure; we are all at their disposal for a careful study of the facts.

All our associations have one single aim: to give Jesus Christ back to the worker. We have not sought material advantages; our sole aim has been to bring them closer to God.

The first means of bringing the worker closer to God is to give him back the priest. So we have a chaplain and a chapel. All our associations are organised with very numerous councils of men, young men, girls and women, which are presided over each month, in turn, by the chaplain. The chaplain spends the whole of Sunday with the various associations, assembled in their meeting places. In this way the priest is always in contact with the people; and to put the heart of the priest in contact with the heart of the people is to put the heart of the people in contact with the Heart of Jesus Christ. (*Loud applause.*)

The priest also has frequent dealings with the working population through the catechism classes. There is catechism every day for the children of the mill, from the age of eight to sixteen. Each group has its weekly catechism, and those preparing for their First Communion have it several times a week.

After their First Communion they learn it again; for the proverb that says one must forget three times before one remembers applies to the catechism as to everything else.

What is the Eucharistic life of our associations?

Every Sunday, at half past six, there is the Communion Mass. At this Mass a good half of those present receive Communion together with the whole of the employer's family. (*Applause.*) At nine o'clock there is the High Mass, which is very well attended. In a spirit of reparation that governs all our works, a good part of the population attends Mass twice, once for themselves and once for those who do not attend. (*Applause.*)

In the parish there are likewise two Masses every Sunday, at hours different from those of the mill.

Every Sunday a delegation from the mill goes to the High Mass in the parish.

The schoolchildren attend Mass every day. They begin with two decades of the rosary on weekdays and three on Sundays; then the children recite the prayers of the Mass, the little boys one day, the little girls the next, each child reciting a paragraph in turn, so that all are obliged to follow. On Sundays the preparation for Holy Communion and the thanksgiving are always said aloud; for this the acts before and after Communion are recited as they are found in the catechism, so that the children easily remember them; then five *Pater* and five *Ave* are said.

We also have confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, which meet every month. There is adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on the first Sunday of every month for the whole population, and especially for the brothers of the Blessed Sacrament, who take their places in the choir; the women have a special place in the nave.

Nocturnal adoration takes place four times a year and is very well attended. There are never fewer than seven or eight adorers for each hour of the night.

Finally, we have the Third Order of St Francis for men and for women; they too have a monthly meeting in the chapel, presided over by the chaplain.

But we have organised the Eucharistic life even within the mill itself; for we should never reach the world of labour if we did not sanctify the workshop where it works and where it spends the greater part of its time. What use would the church, the circle, the association be, if the workroom corrupted all the good that might have been done there? It is therefore this room that must be Christianised for the work to be complete.

To reach this goal, we have relied on constant religious action. The girls, for example, always wear their ribbons as Children of Mary. It is a custom we introduced in order to commit them publicly. The district is bad, debauchery is very widespread there: well, committed by the livery of Mary, these girls are protected against their own frailty. They are brought by gentleness to wear this ribbon, which they never take off, neither at work, nor at home, nor in the village, nor out walking, and which obliges them to remain virtuous. (*Applause.*)

In every room there are statuettes of the Sacred Heart, of the Blessed Virgin and of St Joseph, which follow one another according to the month. Candles offered in homage burn before them almost constantly.

I cannot tell you what an impression of piety these candles give when one enters the rooms where the noise of the work is so deafening that even by shouting one cannot make oneself heard. They are the touching expression of the worker's piety, and they spread through the whole mill an indefinable devout charm, a religious atmosphere. (*Applause.*)

In each workshop there is a councillor, man or woman, in charge of the rights of God. In our system the workers must do everything themselves. It is the councillors, men and women, who do everything they can to find helpers, so that the workshop may become a centre of sanctification and conversion instead of a hotbed of immorality. When, by chance, a newcomer who does not know the customs

allows himself coarse or improper words, or one of those smutty jokes that go round the mills, he is at once taken up by comrades who know how to put a good measure of humour into their reply and who end by remaining masters of the field, without wounding the offender, for we can do more for conversion by love than by violence.

In each workshop we also have the hour of watch. The person keeping the guard of honour wears the red ribbon.

The men go to confession freely during working hours. As for the women, they are given a token, which they hand to the overseer, so that it passes from him to the woman councillor and then to another woman worker; in this way there is one woman from each room going to the confessional at a time.

This need for confessionals in the mill is beyond dispute; for it is physically impossible for the workers to go to confession otherwise. I was talking about this recently in Lille, and it was agreed that in a mill where there is no chapel there must absolutely be at least a small oratory where the workers can go to confession during working hours. One cannot demand of a man who has spent twelve hours in torrid heat that he should then go to a cold, icy church, where he will sometimes have to wait a long time to make his confession.

What are the fruits of all this organisation? As for the spiritual fruits, here they are.

We have more than 1,000 Communions a month. In the employer's family, seven children have left for the convent in the last six years. (*Applause.*) For, gentlemen, it often happens that these works done for the worker are more useful to the employer and to the employer's family than to the worker himself, and they are the best pledge of blessings and supernatural graces that a father can give his children.

In the workers' family we have the same fruitfulness. We already have several priests and many men and women religious. Every year five, six or seven of our workers enter the convent. Five of our chil-

dren are at present in the minor seminary, and one in the major seminary.

From the moral point of view, which is also a material point of view, we have the happiness of seeing families rebuilt every day. Couples come to us from Reims and elsewhere living in utter disorder, almost entirely separated, and they are restored to union and peace at Val-des-Bois. Recently I heard a worker who had come to the mill eighteen months before say: “I have been married for eight years, and I have only known the happiness of married life since I have been at the Val. Before that I did not know what it was.” (*Applause.*) The women learn their duties in their associations, and the men in theirs; and when they are together, peace and love reign in their homes instead of discord. (*Applause.*)

Association begins early. We have councillors, boys and girls, of eight years old. We want to teach even the little children to devote themselves to others.

From the material point of view, the work produces results as astonishing as from the spiritual point of view. Those who would not be moved by the consideration that in a mill with a population of 1,200 to 1,300 inhabitants there are 1,000 Communion a month will doubtless be moved by this other consideration: that 10% of wages are deposited in the savings bank, that a large proportion of the families have substantial deposits, and that a third of them have as much as 6,000 francs in savings. (*Applause.*)

Gentlemen, are these marvels that the Eucharist has produced among us impossible elsewhere? Thank God, no; and every day, especially since the pilgrimage of industrialists to Rome, new factories spring up where the same marvels shine forth.

Lately I was called to a large town. An industrialist had set up a cheap restaurant for his 1,200 workers, granting them enormous advantages. He said to me: “I am going to do good to my workers, and, when I have won their hearts, I shall try to give them a little more re-

ligion.” I answered him: “What you are doing is good; but do you want to convert your workers? — Yes, and to do so I am beginning by drawing them to me. — Well, sir, your workers need other bread than the bread you want to give them; they need the Eucharistic bread, the flesh and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Leave your restaurant, make it into a chapel, and you will do well by it!” (*Applause.*) No sooner said than done. During Holy Week I attended a retreat given in that chapel. There were 350 men following the exercises. The employer, who had not dared to hope for such a result, was amazed. It is always so; one is quite astonished to succeed a hundred times better than one had dared to hope. When the retreat was over, the employer said to me: “If I have 40 Communion, I shall be content.” I answered him: “You will have at least 200.” In fact he had 250. And the women protested, and drew up a petition to have a retreat of their own, and they had it on Low Sunday.

That is what the association had achieved after only a few months. (*Applause.*)

Those of you who were at the last congress in Lille will remember the story told by one of our friends, who had a mill where he employs almost nothing but women. He too wished to sanctify his mill. He singled out a woman worker who seemed to him better able than the others to understand his ideas, and asked her in private: “Will you help me convert the mill? — Me? But I can do nothing. — “You can do everything if you want to. We shall begin by praying. We shall receive Communion every week for the success of our undertaking; then you will find one or two of your companions, whom you will interest in our work, and they in their turn will spread it.” That was six or seven months ago at the most, and today the mill has its chaplain and is entirely converted. But the aim was to go further and convert another mill that was in immense need of it. The women councillors were asked: “Who will go over there to convert the mill, for there is not a single woman worker there whom one could approach?” And

five of them stood up and went to the other end of the town to expose themselves to every possible affront in order to convert their companions, with only one reward to expect, as the employer put it: martyrdom. (*Applause.*)

That overturns all the ideas of the economists. It is not with music nor with cheap bread that men are converted: it is by giving them Our Lord Jesus Christ, frankly and squarely. For in our materialist century this need for the divine is so deep that, when one speaks of the supernatural to the people, one satisfies the most intimate desire of their soul: it is the grace and mercy of God that have placed this instinct and this hunger in the heart of man, and it is to this above all that the Eucharist responds, the Eucharist which is the *way* of salvation in the factory.

I also told you, gentlemen, that the Eucharist is the truth in the factory. When the employer reflects on his work of conversion, he is struck by the immense love of Our Lord Jesus Christ for us; he wonders at how immense and freely given this love is, how generous and disinterested. And the first conclusion he draws from it is that he must love his workers without demanding anything of them in return.

A second lesson he receives from the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is respect for men. What respect the God of the Eucharist has for us! To go neither to the right nor to the left without being carried by a man, to come down from the altar to go to men only at the call of a man! Well, the employer too owes respect to his workers. If he has authority, it is in order to serve and not to oppress. (*Applause.*)

The third lesson we draw from the Eucharist is the need for the action of men. Our Lord could have saved us all by himself: he preferred to make use of our help in order to save us through one another. Therefore the worker must be employed to save the worker. Therefore the employer must be the inspirer of action, but he must hide himself within the social body, as the heart is hidden within the

body. He must give the impulse, inspire love of God and neighbour in a few chosen workers, encourage them and set their hearts on fire; but it is for them to act, and to them the honour of success must go. The employer must allow them to be praised when they spend themselves for the common good; he must not take away from this secondary activity the legitimate share of glory that is due to it. (*Applause.*)

This last point, gentlemen, is essential in our works. Before us, many employers concerned themselves with their workers, showing themselves far more generous than we are, far more lavish than we are with efforts and sacrifices, and yet they did not succeed. It is to this special character of our efforts that I venture to call your full attention. The workers must appear to act alone. Every week twelve councils meet at our mill, and these twelve assemblies each delegate one of their members to a higher council over which I preside, thus inspiring the twelve lower ones, but without seeming to take any part in them.

Finally, gentlemen, in the factory and through his adorable Eucharist, Jesus Christ is the *life*. Life is sacrifice; life is the love of suffering for the salvation of one's neighbour. And the cross is joy; the cross is life.

In the factory this life is strong, powerful, outgoing. We have associations of generous souls who ask God every day to let them suffer and die for their neighbour. And it is at the tabernacle, it is in Holy Communion, that they find what they need to ask for it and, if God so wills, to accomplish it. (*Applause.*)

How many other things I should have to tell you! When one speaks of God, one can never finish; but since it must be so, let us repeat once more that sweet and magnificent acclamation to the Eucharist: "Praised and adored for ever be the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar!" (*Prolonged applause.*)

Mgr Mermillod. — Gentlemen, the biblical story tells us that one day a patriarch, wishing to bless his elder son, blessed the younger, thanks to

a clever and motherly substitution of the one for the other. A moment ago, as I listened to these simple, grave and heartfelt words, I wondered whether, beneath the lay clothes of the speaker, there was not hidden the heart of St Francis de Sales. And in Mr Harmel's very words, did I not find a faithful echo of this maxim of our gentle and pious doctor: "The great secret of doing good," he said, "is not to do it alone, but to seek helpers and to hide behind them." Yes, it was this language of St Francis de Sales that I thought I heard a moment ago, in the very midst of the nineteenth century, in the full flood of materialism and hatred, amid the deafening noise of the machines and the clamour of socialism run mad.

We ourselves, bishops and priests, shall take away from this speech the deeper and stronger conviction that we must never despair of anyone's salvation. Whatever the hostility, the prejudices and the passions, there always remains in hearts the old fibre of baptism, ever ready to vibrate at the breath of Christian devotedness and the spirit of sacrifice.

And if the people no longer go to the Church, the Church must go to the people. Between them there are nineteen centuries of a marriage that cannot be broken, and the apparent divorce pronounced by the revolution has not yet been ratified either in heaven or on earth. Our Lord sealed this union with his sweat at Nazareth, and with his blood shed on Calvary and on the altar. Now "what God has joined together, man shall never put asunder." (*Applause.*)

CATHOLIC ACTION

Reims, September 1889. Les Questions actuelles, vol. VI (1889), p. 230-235

*Speech by Mr Harmel delivered at Reims,
September 1889*

Gentlemen,

We have brought you together this evening to speak to you about the formation of a Catholic committee for the arrondissement of Reims.

So that you may be in a position to decide, we must first set out for you our reason for existing, our aim, our profession of faith, our political principle, our conduct in the present elections, and finally our organisation.

I. Our reason for existing. — The motto so widely practised in former times and so neglected today, “Unity is strength”, shows the reason for our meeting. France is made up of Catholics in an immense majority; it is oppressed by a handful of Freemasons, who manage, with the help of terror, to dominate millions of men without meeting any serious resistance. Why this lamentable situation? It is because decent people are overrun by that dreadful plague called individualism, that is to say, every man for himself; it is because Catholics are not organised; there is among them neither agreement nor common action, and the enemy easily gets the better of those who stand alone.

II. Our aim. — Our aim is to win, over the destinies of our country, the legitimate influence that must belong to men of faith. Yes, gentlemen, despite the faults that have piled up for far too long, if we will it, nothing will be done without us, and in a few years, if we persevere, everything will be done by us.

The committee will have a permanent action and an occasional action: permanent, to seize every opportunity of exerting influence, from the legislative point of view by petitions, from the social point of view by spreading the good press and by institutions favourable to the moral and material interests of the workers; occasional, at election time. For, for Catholics, voting is an act of conscience, with this aggravating factor: in ordinary human acts only our own person and our family suffer from our faults, whereas in elections abstention or a thoughtless vote can bring disaster upon the whole nation. Electoral victories, sometimes even the future of a whole country, have often been seen decided by a majority of a single vote. There is therefore an important duty to be fulfilled here, without worrying too much about the triumph of our cause. For at the judgement we shall give an account of the fulfilment of our duty, and not of the success or failure of our efforts. (Applause.)

III. Our profession of faith. — We are Catholics, that is to say, we acknowledge and publicly proclaim that Jesus Christ is our Master, our Father, our Saviour and our King. We want Him to reign over France, and we firmly believe that He alone will restore to us our honour, our influence in the world and our material prosperity.

We therefore have three goods to claim:

1. The freedom of the Church, 2. the freedom of the family, 3. the protection of the interests of the people.

1. It is to the Church, peacemaker in discord and protector of the weak, that our society owes what little good it still has left. Governments that stifle her voice lead peoples back to barbarism, the fruit of hatreds and divisions, and to slavery, the result of force when force no longer has a higher law to keep it in check.

We therefore consider it our first duty to claim the freedom of the Church. She alone can command consciences and oblige the strong to respect the weak. She alone, in the name of a God of love, can maintain peace and unity among the citizens of one and the same country.

2. The foundation of society is the family; that of the family is the authority of the father. The laws which for a century have been undermining this authority have just crowned their tyranny by denying parents the right to direct the education of their children.

This is a crime against nature itself. Education without God will lead us into the abyss. It will give us a nation without families in the Christian sense of the word. For a home where God is unknown knows no more of authority or of devotedness; it is nothing more than a human agglomeration without dignity and without strength.

We therefore mean to pursue, by every lawful means, the freedom, the stability and the honour of the home, which are the foundations of civil liberty.

3. Catholics remember that manual labour was honoured by Our Lord, who chose it for his mortal life. The Church, faithful to the commandments of her divine Head, raised up the work of the hands. She made it a social function instead of a degrading necessity, and thereby she transformed its character. The associations she created provided, together with the salvation of souls, professional skill, security of work, material prosperity and mutual help.

Workers and employers, united together by religion, lived in peace. The Renaissance, by bringing back pagan ideas, began to destroy this admirable edifice, which the Revolution finished off with brutal ferocity. (Prolonged applause.)

We want the public authorities to care for the people, to favour manual labour crushed by speculation, and to concern themselves with whatever can secure the morality, justice, human dignity and home life of the workers.

Our programme is therefore nothing but a programme of peace. It rules out any political upheaval. Religion and fatherland: that is the only ground on which all men who care for the recovery of France can rally.

IV. Our political principle. — We do not wish to bind ourselves to any political shade. In reality there are now only two parties facing each other: some are for religion, the others are against it. Besides, political forms are far more consequences than causes. Our candidate is therefore any man, whatever party shade he belongs to, who will dare to work for God, for in working for God one works for one's country.

Those we reject are the atheists, the enemies of Christ. A regime that relies on such men must be vigorously fought by us. We must not willingly allow Jesus Christ to be scourged, even by one of our friends. Whatever its title or its formula, as soon as it persecutes our God, we are against it. The only rule of our convictions is our attachment to the faith of our fathers; it is the only one that never deceives.

History teaches us that the only powers that have not abused their might are those that acknowledged God as their master and his law as their rule, whatever their political forms may otherwise have been.

We therefore call to us all the Catholics of the arrondissement of Reims without asking them their political preferences, with which we do not wish to concern ourselves.

V. Our conduct in the present elections. — What conduct shall we adopt in the present elections? We have told you our principles and our wishes. Can we, in these elections, find what we are looking for? That may be difficult. We must therefore, without losing sight of our full aim, be content to come as close to it as possible, and, between two candidates, choose the one who strays least from it. If we can impose a minimum, for example a pledge to fight the wicked laws aimed at the priesthood and at the education of the young, a pledge to put an end to the laws of persecution and to take up the interests of labour, we shall have found a candidate whom we shall support with all our hearts. If we can obtain nothing, the duty of the committee will be to seek out a frankly Catholic candidate, even if we were cer-

tain of failure. For sometimes we cannot avoid defeat, but we can avoid dishonour. (Cheers and applause.)

VI. Our duty. — Gentlemen, the enemies of Jesus Christ have long been working to de-Christianise France. They do so with an ever-growing activity and energy. And yet what motives drive them? Greed and ambition, to which they sacrifice their country, their families and their own happiness.

And we, gentlemen, do we show the same activity, do we display the same energy in defending the sacred cause entrusted to us? When God, the family and the fatherland call for our devotedness and our work, shall we be less eager than those who destroy? No, gentlemen, shall we? We are all going to set to work. It shall not be said that the soldiers of Jesus Christ showed themselves less valiant than the followers of the devil.

To work, then, and may Christ help us! (Burst of applause.)

— The vote showed the support of all those present. The committee was formed at once and the following organisation was adopted:

VII. Organisation. — The committee, which has its seat in Reims, is made up of all the men of faith who, by their intelligence, their position and their devotedness, are in a position to work actively for the carrying out of the programme adopted.

The committee's officers are a president, two vice-presidents, a treasurer and two secretaries, appointed by the assembly.

VIII. District sections. — The groups, which take the name of sections, are set up in the various districts of the city of Reims.

The members of the committee who live in the district where the section meets attend as delegates.

Recruitment is done in groups of ten, at the head of each of which a decurion is placed.

Each section has its own officers. They are a president chosen from among the committee's delegates, a vice-president and a secretary-treasurer.

The committee fixes the days and times of the section meetings and sends out the notices.

IX. Cantonal sections. — Groups, which take the name of cantonal sections, are set up in each of the cantons of the arrondissement of Reims.

The officers of the cantonal section are a president, two vice-presidents, two secretaries and a treasurer.

In each commune the officers appoint one or more decurions to recruit the people who adhere to the Catholic programme.

The officers of the cantonal sections agree with the committee in studying the organisation best suited to the needs of their cantons.

One of the committee's two vice-presidents shall be chosen from among the officers of the cantonal sections.

X. Correspondence. — The decurions must correspond every week with the officers of the section, who give them their direction. The officers of the sections must likewise correspond every week with the committee.

Here is an organisation that seems very simple and that can be very fruitful. Why should it not be tried everywhere?

THE POPE AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Speech on the Pilgrimage of the Ten Thousand (October 1889). Les Questions actuelles, vol. VII (1890), p. 300-303

*Speech delivered at the Congress of the Catholic committees
by Mr Léon Harmel.*

Gentlemen,

The Catholic Committee has asked us to say a word to you this evening about the pilgrimage of the ten thousand to Rome.

Twice already the France du Travail (Labour France) had been represented: in 1885 by industrialists, in 1887 by employers and workers.

Twice the teachings of Leo XIII had come down upon us and had borne their fruit in the flowering of the works that followed. These results encouraged us to pursue our undertaking. But, we must say it, we were above all moved by the Holy Father's desire to come into contact with the masses of the people. During the two years that separated the last two pilgrimages, His Holiness let slip no occasion to say again with what joy He was awaiting the ten thousand workers who had been promised. Such a desire was an order for us; and, to satisfy it, the obstacles that kept multiplying could not raise their rampart high enough, for, I ask you, what would one not do to bring sunshine to the heart of this beloved Father, above all when he is steeped in so much bitterness and sorrow? (*Applause.*)

We were also pressed by the growing difficulties of the social movement. It is becoming more and more evident that we are heading for a general destruction of all society if the authority of the Church does not regain its sway over the world of labour. We must show in practice the falsehood of the idea, spread among the crowds, that reli-

gion is an instrument in the service of the powerful against the weak. That is why it is necessary to lead these multitudes with calloused hands to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, so that, seeing him, receiving his caresses, hearing his voice, they may understand that the Pope is today what he has always been, the defender of the weak and the protector of the workers. (*Applause.*)

From the very first audience, on 20 October 1889, our pilgrims heard the clear and energetic words of the eminent Cardinal Langénieux, whose address was made up of the very texts of the Holy Father on the social question.

“He recalled that the Church, in the past, when her voice was better heeded and more obeyed, came to the help of the workers otherwise than by the bounty of her charity, that she had created and encouraged those ‘great corporative institutions’ which ensured peace and prosperity for so many centuries.”

“He appealed to the justice of the public authorities, whose task it is to safeguard the interests of the citizens, and particularly of the little and the weak, who have the greatest need of protection. Finally he begged the Holy Father not to weary of reminding the world of respect for the laws of justice and right in the necessary relations of men with one another.”

In present-day society justice is so little practised that its very name has become hateful. (*Bravo!*) Is it not necessary, gentlemen, that the men of labour, far from the feverish preoccupations of business, should go to Rome to hear the infallible Pope speak of Christian justice, in which the harshness of right is tempered by the gentleness of charity? (*Applause.*)

That is what the Holy Father did, with that incomparable loftiness which is natural to him, in the magnificent speech that you have all read.

How many charming incidents we could tell you! Some workshops worked an extra hour a week to earn the cost of the journey. Lots

were drawn. One day the lot fell to a Protestant worker. The lucky winner was at once pressed to sell his ticket for money. The offers went as high as 80 francs. “— No,” he replied, “it is the sweat of our mates; that is not for sale.” And he handed his ticket to the best Catholic in the workshop. (*Applause.*)

Shall I speak to you of those heroic employers of the Nord, at whose head marched our valiant friend, the very dear and deeply mourned Mr H. Bayart? They made the journey from Lille to Rome, some fifty-six hours, in second class, eight to a compartment, each with his own workers. With them they slept in dormitories, took their meals and made their visits, on foot or by carriage like them, with no other privilege than doing the chores and paying for the little extras. (*Applause.*) There is a lesson in fraternity and equality well worth the sumptuous inscriptions with which the public monuments have been adorned.

His Lordship the Bishop of Agen, reviving the customs of the first centuries, came with his people, in a second-class carriage that was full; he returned in the same way. And so the workers never missed an occasion to acclaim him in the Eternal City. (*Applause.*)

We also concerned ourselves with the cab drivers of Rome. We were anxious that our Christian popular demonstration should benefit these humble men, whose work had previously been taken from them by the large omnibuses. We held several union meetings, at which France was acclaimed. We came back with diplomas as honorary cab drivers, of which we are proud, because they bind us to a guild in which we count many friends. (*Applause.*) — Ah! they said to us, if only people took care of us as you have done these last few weeks!

Yes, gentlemen, if we concerned ourselves more with the people, what treasures we should discover beneath an appearance that is sometimes a little rough!

One of our cab drivers, who lived in Trastevere, was a poet; he composed for us a sonnet full of delicate and touching sentiments.

In the fifteen halls where the pilgrims followed one another for four weeks, the tables were served by Roman prelates belonging to the papal court or holding the highest offices, such as Mgr Jacobini, Archbishop of Tyre and Secretary of Propaganda. His Eminence Cardinal Langénieux served each evening in a different hall. Their Lordships the French bishops present in Rome did the same. Our workers were filled with admiration, and they said to one another: Now we understand that it is a greater honour to serve than to be served. (*Prolonged applause.*)

The sight of the arrivals and departures drew a large and friendly crowd. It took rather a long time to put all the men of a whole train, one after another, into the little cabs. But this inconvenience was borne cheerfully to gladden our friends the cab drivers. Traditional costumes, too rare in these days of tedious uniformity, did nevertheless make their appearance, thanks to the Bretons and the Basques. They were made much of, as was only right. At the departures people embraced like old friends, and when the train moved off, cheers filled the station and greetings were exchanged, amid a joyful emotion, between those who were leaving and those who were staying.

How can I describe to you the wonderful audiences in St Peter's, when Leo XIII came down at eight o'clock to say Mass for us and stayed with his children until noon and even one o'clock in the afternoon? The workers were lined up all around the immense basilica. Each one could see the Pope at his ease, speak to him, kiss his hand, and hear the august Pontiff address him to ask about his work and his family. We witnessed the most touching scenes, which more than once brought tears to the Holy Father's eyes.

What an unspeakable and incomparable sight!

Yes, gentlemen, through the tears that streamed down our faces, we saw again Jesus Christ walking among the crowds, calling to him the little and the humble, and lavishing on them the treasures of his divine heart. (*Prolonged applause.*)

And so we have no fear of being contradicted by any of those who know workers who have come back from Rome when we affirm that their minds, their hearts, their whole being have remained under the sway of an emotion that will last as long as life. We still hear the cheers rising into the dome of St Peter's like the sound of thunder, to spread through the immense building like the great voice of mankind acclaiming its leader raised upon the shield. (*Applause.*) And wherever we meet again, we who were witnesses of these wonders, we love to repeat our cry: Long live Leo XIII! Long live the Pope-King! the peacemaker of the nations, the defender of the weak, the protector of the world of labour.

For our workers the Pope was everything; and were they not right? All these monuments of which Rome is so proud are the work of man, whereas the Pope is a divine work. In his frail human appearance, He surpasses all pride, all heights, all powers. He is the prolongation of God dwelling among us.

Is it nothing, gentlemen, to give birth to these feelings, to kindle this enthusiasm in the masses of the people? And if, thanks to the energetic support of all Catholics, we can continue every two years to lead ever larger crowds to the feet of Jesus Christ living in his vicar, do you think that we shall not have effectively prepared the salvation of our country? (*Bravo!*)

Without any doubt, gentlemen, for we shall have wrested from the enemies of God the monopoly of defending the rights of the worker, to place it in the hands of the Papacy, which alone can untie the Gordian knot of the social question in justice and in love. (*Prolonged applause.*)

To work, then! Help us, all of you! Let us complete together the alliance of the two great social forces, the Papacy and the people, so that France, the great sower of ideas, after having been the source of so many ruins in the century now ending, may prepare the Christian

triumphs of the twentieth century through the coming of the social reign of Jesus Christ. (*Repeated applause.*)

THE WAGE QUESTION

Letter to La Croix de Reims, 25 October 1893. Les Questions actuelles, vol. XXI (1893), p. 280-284

Letter from Mr Léon Harmel.

Val-des-Bois, 25 October 1893.

Dear Sirs,

It is always with pleasure that I read *La Croix de Reims*, because I find in it at one and the same time love for the worker and an understanding of his needs. And you are not content with writing fine pages that stir hearts; you strive at the same time to call forth institutions useful to the well-being of the workers.

That is the fruitful way, for no doubt many things in our society need changing, but to note it is not enough: we must make a beginning, in the small measure that is possible.

You ask me what might be attempted on the subject of wages? It is with pleasure that I shall tell you our thoughts and our attempts.

And first of all, we asked ourselves the question of principle: must the wage be sufficient for the family, or only for the individual?

TRUE PRINCIPLES ON INDIVIDUALISM. DIFFICULTIES MET IN APPLYING THEM.

Le Play long ago proclaimed the family the *social unit par excellence*. In all his works he urges us to fight against the individualism encouraged by laws and customs. For, says this eminent thinker, “wherever individualism becomes predominant in social relations, men plunge into the struggles of barbarism².”

2. *La Réforme sociale en France*, vol. 1, p. 384.

As long as these principles were proclaimed in the abstract, they were generally accepted, at least in a negative way. But as soon as people tried to apply them to the law of labour and wages, that is to say, in short, to the most important social relations of men with one another, they raised the liveliest and most unexpected protests.

The disputes that arose among the best of men have shown the depth of the abyss into which minds have fallen under the influence of the odious Roman Caesarean law, substituted by the Renaissance for Christian law and definitively enshrined by the Napoleonic Code. The truth that was accepted in the abstract from Le Play is now refused, or at least disputed, when it appears to follow from the infallible teaching of the Sovereign Pontiff.

It seems, however, that if people reflected, not only would they admit this fundamental truth, but generous men who concern themselves with the well-being of the people would look for the means of advancing the question and of guiding society towards the fulfilment of a duty so disregarded and yet so essential.

Do not expect me to speak to you of commutative or general justice, of charity and strict obligation. All that is the province of theologians, and it is my opinion that to speak of these theological questions to employers would confuse their minds and hamper practical action, the only thing to be desired. For we industrialists need to know our duties and to fulfil them, without worrying too much about which chapter they come under. Besides, we all know that neglected duties of charity lead a great many people into an unhappy eternity, just as surely as injustice does.

If the family is the social unit par excellence, the individual without a family is, so to speak, an abstraction compared with the individual with a family, who is the only complete social being; consequently, the wage must be a family wage. Such was our conclusion.

ELEMENTS MAKING UP THE WAGE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE FAMILY.

Next, we examined the various elements of which a sufficient wage is made up, in order to try to satisfy each of these elements in some measure.

The wage consists first of all of the sum of money paid to the worker for his work, either by the piece or by the day. On this point employers can sometimes, and quite justly, plead the disastrous and often unfair competition that goes on at home and abroad: it is the sad fruit of the suppression of the guilds and of the complete disorganisation that resulted from it.

In the second place, we must examine the purchasing power of the money paid. If, with 5 francs, the worker can, by certain methods, obtain as many things useful for life as with 6.50 fr. or 7 francs, it is evident that this amounts to a certain improvement of the wage. This result can be obtained by joint purchasing, by cooperative societies and by everything that brings the producer into contact with the consumer. Since the state of industry makes a sufficient wage difficult in certain cases, we understood that there followed for us employers a strict and absolute duty to promote with all our strength the organisations that make the money we have paid more productive. It is in vain that small shopkeepers are put forward as an objection: to me, that is like a father of a family who would worry more about feeding his neighbours than about giving his children what they need. Moreover, the objection is purely specious. It would be impossible to name a country where small shopkeeping has collapsed because of co-operatives. At most one might name a few places where they have made small shopkeepers more honest, which cannot be a bad thing.

The third element of comfort in the home is the art of using money; a capable housewife will manage to keep her family quite decently on a sum sometimes far smaller than the one on which the

same number of children will live with difficulty when their mother does not know the great art of wisely managed spending. We have noticed that, all too often, the girls of the working class seem to be trained in our schools to be schoolmistresses rather than housewives. That is why we have divided the time in our girls' classes, giving a fitting share to what we call the *housekeeping school*. This consists in learning sewing, mending, laundering and washing, cooking and housekeeping. Here is a very important reform, which could be made everywhere in the independent schools, without upheaval and without expense, and which in a few years would have the happiest consequences for the comfort of workers' families³.

In the fourth place, it is absolutely necessary to build up reserves, without which there can be neither security for the future nor remedy for the accidents of life.

The cooperative organisation of the Middle Ages had immense reserves in property held in mortmain, the value of which, for the workers' guilds, Taine puts at sixteen billion at the time of the Revolution. Here, as everywhere, Masonic impiety stripped the worker by violence and injustice. We thought that we ought to try to build up reserves from the individual point of view, from the employer's point of view and from the corporative point of view.

DEVELOPMENT OF SAVING.

A manifold organisation has been set up in our mills to encourage saving, whether in our schools, where a hundred and twenty-five children deposit about three thousand francs each year, or at our pay offices, where a hundred and twenty families save each year, on aver-

3. Belgium shows us the example. A committee, of which the Queen herself chose to take the presidency, prompts and encourages the founding of housekeeping schools wherever there is some goodwill.

age, fifty-six thousand francs⁴, or finally through the corporative bonus. We shall speak only of the last, because it applies to everyone, to the poor as to the rich. The corporative bonus is nothing other than the profit produced by the economic institutions, which is placed in the savings bank until the age of fifty (in case of departure, the whole sum and the interest are handed over at once). On this account, a hundred and seventy-four families have to their credit various sums ranging from twenty francs for beginners to several hundred francs for the older members. These savings form the basis of workers' credit; they make it easier to borrow from the interest-free loan fund (on condition that the savings are made up again as soon as possible). Families with heavy responsibilities, who receive wage supplements as we shall explain, nonetheless see their bonus grow every day, to provide them later with a precious resource.

The employer's reserve has set up a *family fund*, managed by a workers' commission, which pays out each week, in kind, according to need, a wage supplement to reach the agreed minimum that has been established for our population. As our mills are in the country, the workers have a relatively low rent, gardens that provide part of their vegetables, and a simpler and cheaper life.

Under these conditions, we have been able to fix the minimum per day and per head at 0.60 fr. Example: a family of six children, in which only the father works, will receive, if need be, the supplement for a minimum of 4.80 fr. a day. A widow with five children, of whom only one works, will receive the supplement needed to reach 3.60 fr., if this figure is not reached by the wage of the young man or young woman. We do not claim that this minimum is sufficient, but we think that it prevents dire poverty, which is already a first aim to achieve. Moreover, we would point out that in most cases the number counted

4. Under the rules of the savings bank (article 6), each time an account reaches the figure of one thousand francs, the sum is invested in securities or in real estate, as the depositor prefers.

includes very small children, for whom the expense is still slight. The employers bear the cost of the family fund. We are happy to say that in Tourcoing the industrialists have entered upon this path by giving supplements to large families. The railway companies of the Nord, the P.-L.-M., etc., have likewise recognised this principle, by paying to employees who earn less than 1,800 or 2,000 francs a supplement for each child beyond three.

Finally, we are seeking to rebuild the collective reserve through the *corporative patrimony*. In former times this patrimony was enough to support the corporative institutions so wonderfully organised by our forefathers under Christian influence, and so brutally destroyed by the enemies of Jesus Christ, who have always been the enemies and oppressors of the people.

It seems to us that by drawing the attention of all those who have charge of souls, whether as employers or otherwise, to these ideas, one could, by means as simple and as practical as these, move towards a sufficient wage, and so arrive gradually at what the Encyclical of Leo XIII asks of us.

Believe me always, dear Sirs, yours most affectionately.

Léon Harmel.

LETTER FROM MESSRS FÉRON-VRAU AND HARMEL

Rome, 2 April 1895. Les Questions actuelles, vol. XXVIII (1895), p. 294-295

Following the controversies that arose among Catholics over the question of the family wage, Messrs Féron-Vrau and Harmel went to the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, in order to bear clear witness that differences on a few points could not disturb the harmony that must reign among all the sons of the Holy Father.

The following letter, which they are publishing, is a sure pledge of unity.

DECLARATION

AGREED BETWEEN MESSRS FÉRON-VRAU AND LÉON HARMEL
AND BLESSED BY THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF

Knowing that our friends are filially submissive in mind and heart to the directions of the Holy See, and that they desire nothing so much as the peace and the supernatural strength that concord gives, we believe we are answering their wishes in proposing to them that we walk together, under the blessing of our glorious and beloved Pontiff Leo XIII, along the following path, blessed by him:

1. That employers, entering ever more deeply into the duties incumbent upon them, continue their factory works, mixed unions, factory councils and societies of every kind suited to improving the lot of the workers and to holding together those who should form, as it were, a single family.

2. That workers study the teachings of the Sovereign Pontiff in their meetings and associations, persuading themselves that all liberty, all dignity and all prosperity have come to the workers

through Our Lord Jesus Christ and then through his vicars, who have carried on his word for justice and for mercy through the centuries. They follow this path either by joining the mixed unions or by forming workers' unions and workers' professional associations imbued with the Christian spirit.

3. That both the one and the other seek out and promote the action of the priest, who will bring into the various associations the spirit of the Gospel, doctrine, and at the same time unity and concord. It is for him to call forth and to help the moral, professional and economic institutions favourable to the world of labour, in the spirit and in application of the teachings of the Holy See, and in submission to his bishop.

4. That, moreover, in practice, both the one and the other take their inspiration, according to the breadth of the principles of the Church and the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, from the needs arising from places and circumstances; that they avoid an exclusiveness which, by narrowing these applications, might endanger entirely praiseworthy initiatives, and perhaps even the authority of the Holy See, which grants a very appreciable measure of freedom in this respect and recommends mutual tolerance.

Questions of justice and charity must be considered equally by employers and workers, and the efforts made on both sides to arrive at the true solution must be free, as far as possible, of all controversy and all unfair dealing, which only hinder the good and the achievement of peace, which alone is to be desired and which is the chief object of our efforts.

Rome, 2 April 1895.

THE WORKERS' PILGRIMAGE TO ROME

Audience of Leo XIII, 7 August 1897. Les Questions actuelles, vol. XL (1897), p. 48-52

The workers' pilgrimage organised with such devotedness and energy by Mr Léon Harmel was received in solemn audience by Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII on Saturday 7 August. His Eminence Cardinal Ferrata, former apostolic nuncio in Paris, presented the pilgrims to the Sovereign Pontiff. After him Mr Léon Harmel read an address full of faith and gratitude towards the Pontiff who, through his encyclical *Rerum novarum*, has shown such fatherly kindness to the workers.

We reproduce *in extenso* the speech of His Eminence Cardinal Ferrata, the address of Mr Léon Harmel and the reply that Leo XIII was pleased to make.

SPEECH OF CARDINAL FERRATA

Most Holy Father,

On three memorable occasions His Eminence Cardinal Langénieux has had the honour of presenting to Your Holiness a deputation of the Catholic workers of France. As his health is not yet sufficiently restored to allow him to make the journey to Rome again at this season, the excellent Mr Harmel has asked me, in the most gracious terms, to take the place of the eminent Archbishop of Reims on this occasion.

It is a great joy to me to carry out, with the gracious consent of Your Holiness, this fine and honourable mission.

Indeed, during the nine years that it was given me to live in the midst of the great and noble French nation, I was able to observe the winning graces of its mind, the incomparable ardour of its heart for all works of faith and charity, and above all its traditional and con-

stant attachment to this Apostolic See, which rightly earned it, from the most distant times, the glorious title of Eldest Daughter of the Church.

But if I have appreciated at their high worth the merits and services of the various classes of French society, I can say, Most Holy Father, that my admiration has been no less for this hard-working, honest and Christian people, whose manly qualities have contributed so much, and ceaselessly contribute, to increasing the inexhaustible resources, the prosperity and the greatness of the country.

At this moment, Most Holy Father, You have before You a chosen portion of this people, a representation of those workers who are as valiant as they are wise; they have not sought the solution of the social question, which stirs the deep mass of the workers and stands as a formidable problem on the threshold of the twentieth century; they have not sought it in theories as erroneous as they are sterile, but in the teachings, so full of wisdom and loftiness, that You have drawn from the Gospel, from Christian tradition, from sound reason and from Your fatherly heart.

They have sought it in that celebrated document which, from its appearance, drew the serious attention of governments and statesmen, of publicists and economists, no less than of moralists and theologians, a document that will remain in history as the true treatise on labour legislation. In it, indeed, You considered the social question in its full extent, at a time when its very existence was disputed: You defined the evil, pointed out the remedy, and set forth with mastery the duties of the poor and the rich, of governments and peoples. In the light of reason and faith, You laid down the sovereign rules meant to maintain, on the basis of reciprocal rights and duties, the necessary understanding between capital and labour, between employers and workers. You said to the worker: work is the inescapable lot of mankind; it does not degrade, on the contrary it raises and ennobles man. Upon the worker, You added, falls the duty of performing the

agreed work with integrity and fidelity, of not injuring the employer either in his goods or in his person, and of making his observations when the occasion arises, but without violence and without a spirit of sedition.

To the employer, on the other hand, You prescribed not only that he provide the worker with a fitting wage, which is justice; not only that he not use him as an instrument of gain, exploiting his poverty and distress, which would be inhuman; but that he respect in him the dignity of man, heightened by that of the Christian, and treat him with charity and love as regards his material interests as well as his moral good.

To both the one and the other, You showed religion as the source of graces and virtues, religion which imprints deeply in the conscience the sense of what is just and upright and which, keeping each within the sphere of his duties, removes conflicts or at least softens them, because it takes from them all harshness and all bitterness.

Most Holy Father, the French employers and workers, braving the heat of the season, have come to tell You that they have put Your holy teachings into practice, and that these have been for them a condition and a precious foundation of mutual confidence and happy harmony in their daily relations. This harmony will last, as solid as it is lasting, because it is established on the inviolable laws of equity and justice that You have proclaimed.

They therefore bring You the homage of their deep gratitude, of their unshakeable fidelity and of their filial devotedness; they hail in You the Supreme Pastor of souls, and they give themselves up to the gentle influence of Your Fatherhood, which reproduces on earth that of God. That is why, at Your feet more than anywhere else, they feel themselves deeply united, fully brothers and wholly sons of the same good, provident and loving Father who is in heaven.

I should further wish, Most Holy Father, that You add to Your other kindnesses that of allowing Mr Léon Harmel, that perfect

model of the Christian employer, to express to You himself in a few words his own sentiments and those of the good workers who are present here. It will be a sweet consolation for him to open his heart to You! It will be a great joy for the workers to have spoken to You through the mouth of a man who knows them deeply and whom they regard as a father rather than as an employer!

Allow me also, Most Holy Father, to call Your kindly attention in a special way to these priests whom You see gathered here and who have joined this pilgrimage. They are members of that valiant and zealous French clergy who, in conformity with the exhortations of Your Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, under the enlightened direction of the episcopate, have consecrated their devotedness, their energy and their intelligence to the good of the working class. Their presence proves eloquently the bonds of affectionate union that must exist between the clergy and the workers, between religion and the people, between the interests of time and those of eternity.

Bless, Most Holy Father, the priests and the workers; bless the priests, so that they may always be ready to spend themselves, as they do, with all possible solicitude, for the good of the workers, whom the Church regards as her dearest children and the most worthy of her motherly concern, because they are the poorest and the humblest; bless the workers, so that they may never forget that, amid the miseries and sorrows of this life, there is no consolation deeper or truer, no strength more effective or more lasting, than those given to man by the Church and religion!

SPEECH OF MR HARMEL

Most Holy Father,

After an interruption of six years, it is a great happiness for the French pilgrims to satisfy their filial piety by coming to lay at the feet of the Pope of the workers the homage of the France du Travail.

Today we are beginning a new series of annual pilgrimages. We are convinced that the people of France need to come, periodically and tangibly, into contact with the Vicar of Jesus Christ. For it is at this source of all light and of all fruitful liberty that they will find the secret of their prosperity.

It is in the submission of mind and heart to the infallible Pope that Christian France will draw the true unity that will be its strength.

We ask Your precious blessing for the associations of employers and workers formed in the spirit of the immortal Encyclical *Rerum novarum*.

We ask it especially for the vanguard battalions, for the groups of Christian democracy, which have many representatives here. They are Your submissive sons, attentive to Your teachings in order to follow them with greater promptness and greater fidelity.

We ask it likewise for the members of the Association of Catholic Workers' Circles, for the members of the Fraternal Union of Commerce and Industry, for the dioceses, parishes, associations and families represented here by the pilgrims.

All united in a feeling of filial affection for Your Fatherhood, so tenderly kind to us, filled with admiration for a Pontificate that has already accomplished so many wonders, we ask our Master and King Jesus Christ to prolong so precious a life and to preserve in You that vigour of mind which defies the weight of years, so that we may still for a long time acclaim our beloved Father. LONG LIVE LEO XIII!

SPEECH OF THE POPE TO THE FRENCH WORKERS

Most dear Sons,

Amid the difficulties and trials of Our apostolic ministry, the Lord, ever good and helpful, grants Us touching consolations which sustain and strengthen Our old age, and open Our heart to the sweet hope of a happy future for the Church and for society. Today it is given to Us to feel an unspeakable joy in seeing Ourselves surrounded by you,

children of France, who have left your country and who, under the guidance of pious men wholly devoted to you, have come full of faith and love to the Eternal City, to offer your homage to the Vicar of Jesus Christ and to receive his blessing.

It is with deep tenderness that We welcome you, you the representatives of the working class, so worthy of Our interest and of Our fatherly solicitude; you, the sons of that generous France for which, as you know, We have a constant and special affection, because, in spite of individual errors and aberrations, she has never ceased, and does not cease, to show her admirable charity and her energy for the noble cause of religion and civilisation.

We think it fitting today to recall to your minds the principles of equity and justice which alone can provide the solution of the social question.

Not only do you know them, but, thanks be to God, you have put them into practice, finding in them a solid and constant guarantee of harmony and peace in the daily relations between you and your employers. This is a great consolation for Us, because if, on the one hand, Our constant aim during Our pontificate has been to secure for religion the respect due to it, defending its sacred rights with all Our power and placing it above the contingencies and secondary interests of parties, as a shining beacon that must light the way of mankind, on the other hand, Our efforts were no less constant and energetic to ward off the grave dangers and terrible conflicts that threaten society, and to strengthen everywhere the reign of justice and, by its means, the order, well-being and tranquillity of the peoples.

That is why We address to you with all Our heart, to you, Catholic workers of France, Our congratulations and Our encouragement. To you We have only to say: be steadfast in your good resolutions; continue, ever docile to the direction of your respective pastors, to love and practise religion, the inexhaustible source of consolation and courage in the struggles and tribulations of life; lastly, carefully avoid

contact with dangerous men, who seek the solution of the so difficult social problem in the destruction of the inviolable laws on which property, the family and all mankind rest. Such men will only stir up incessant strife, pile up ruins and make the condition of the workers harder and more painful.

It is sweet to Us to express Our satisfaction to this fine and large gathering of French priests whom We see here around Us, united with the workers' pilgrimage. Their presence is pleasing to Us, because We know that they devote themselves, by word and by works, to promoting the moral and material good of the workers, by dispelling misunderstandings, by instilling concord and by bringing into their ranks the rules of Christian life, which are the most powerful means of solving the problem that preoccupies them. We have the sweet confidence that, under the wise direction of the episcopate, they will continue this fine and noble mission, showing themselves ever more charitable and eager towards the poorest, the weakest and the most suffering, who are the best-loved portion of Our Lord and of the Church, heir to his divine charity.

And now, as you return to your beautiful country and to your dear families, spread the good seed around you and show everyone, by your spirit of discipline and restraint, by the good and sound upbringing of your children and by irreproachable conduct, that you are truly Christian workers, worthy sons of the Catholic Church and of France. We shall accompany you with Our good wishes and Our prayers, so that the Lord may assist, protect and console you throughout the whole course of your life. And as a pledge of this protection from heaven and of Our fatherly goodwill, We grant with all Our heart to you, to your wives, to your children, to your families, as also to your employers and to all those who are present here, priests and laity, the apostolic blessing.

THE FRANCE DU TRAVAIL IN ROME

Audience of Leo XIII, 8 October 1898. Les Questions actuelles, vol. XLVI (1898), p. 2-5

On Saturday 8 October, many French pilgrims, led by Mr Léon Harmel, came to lay at the feet of His Holiness, Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, the filial homage of the France du Travail. The Sovereign Pontiff answered the address, read by Mr Léon Harmel, with a speech that had a great resonance, not only in France, but also in Germany. It was Mgr de Croy who read this pontifical document to the pilgrims.

We publish *in extenso* the address of Mr Harmel and the magnificent speech in which His Holiness Leo XIII bears such touching witness to his solicitude for France.

ADDRESS TO THE HOLY FATHER READ BY MR LÉON HARMEL

Most Holy Father,

Here once again, at Your sacred feet, is the France du Travail.

Your Holiness never ceases to multiply Your benefits towards the Church and towards France: is it not the duty of Your children to renew to You, with ever greater love, the expression of their gratitude?

They have hastened from every corner of France to see Peter; they have wished to tell You once more of their deep respect, their filial love, their absolute submission to all the political and social directions of Him who holds, with such majesty, the visible place of Jesus Christ on earth.

They know what their country owes You. Amid her bitterness and her abandonments, France has never ceased to be sustained and revived by the constant and faithful friendship of the great Pontiff

whom nothing stops, not even hesitation in obedience, when it is a question of the nation that He tenderly loves. Only yesterday, it was from this Vatican that the all-powerful word went forth which maintains for France the age-old privileges whose exercise assures her of her great place in the world and her honour among the nations.

We bring You the thanks of the French fatherland. The Religious of the Assumption, whose Pilgrimages of Penance to the East are so dear to Your Holiness and so salutary to souls, have wished to be with us. In answer to Your encouragement, they wish to multiply their peaceful crusades to the Holy Places.

It is also the people of the workers who stand before You. It is to You that this people owes a more exact and more complete awareness of its rights and of its duties. It is You who have prepared its social and economic ascent. It is Your Encyclicals that have drawn up the charter of its emancipation and of its dignity. You have reconciled the world of labour with the Church. Your teachings have clearly shown it: those who work with their hands have never had, and will never have, true friends and effective supporters outside this Church, whose Founder chose to be a worker and chose to employ workers to spread his doctrine.

Christian democracy, conceived and understood in its true Catholic sense, may well meet adversaries who do not know it; but it will bring back into the bosom of the Church the crowds that revolutionary socialism would have drawn away from it.

Yes, Most Holy Father, we can give You this consoling assurance: Your teachings are better understood every day; Your directions are better followed every day. In spite of an opposition that conceals its weakness, those who are young in years and those who are young at heart understand You. They hail in You the divine Pilot who knows how to steer in the midst of storms; they hail in You the Prophet whose bold gaze, fixed on the future, can discern the new times. Yes, Most Holy Father, You are securing the triumph of the twofold cause

that is dear to You: that of our Master and King, Jesus Christ, and that of his beloved children, the people of the workers.

Live long yet, Most Holy Father, so that You may witness the victories that Your wisdom has prepared.

LONG LIVE LEO XIII!

SPEECH OF THE POPE

Most dear Sons,

It is a new and sweet joy for Our heart, most dear sons, to see you once more, in Our old age, gathered in this way and assembled in such numbers around Us. Your coming and your presence here are a manifest proof to Us that, far from shaking your fidelity and your constancy, time and events only strengthen more and more in your souls those feelings of respect and attachment to the Apostolic See, of devotedness and filial piety, which you have just expressed to Us and of which, in the past, you have already given Us such numerous and such striking testimonies.

Today, a special thought has helped to bring you back to Us. As you recalled a moment ago, you were eager to thank Us for the recent act by which We confirmed the earlier declarations of the Holy See concerning your traditional protectorate in the East, and it is with this thought that there have joined this workers' pilgrimage the valiant religious whom We see among you and who have deserved so well of the Holy Land. Filled with zeal for the glory of those blessed places which were the witnesses of the life and death of the Saviour of mankind, they periodically lead there those numerous pilgrims of the Pilgrimage of Penance who go to offer God their prayers for the needs of Holy Church and for the return to her bosom of our separated brethren.

We Ourselves, a few years ago, wished for this purpose that a solemn Eucharistic Congress should be held, under the presidency of

a French Cardinal, in that very city of Jerusalem where that great sacrament was instituted which is the divine pledge of union among the faithful. Continue, then, dear sons, your pious journeys to the Holy Land; they will contribute powerfully to strengthening the faith and to making your noble mission in the East fruitful.

As for you, most dear sons, who are the France du Travail, you are well aware that on you too fall important and grave duties concerning society as a whole. And since you have just alluded to democracy, this is what We must impress upon you on this subject:

If democracy takes its inspiration from the teachings of reason enlightened by faith; if, guarding itself against fallacious and subversive theories, it accepts with religious resignation, and as a necessary fact, the diversity of classes and conditions; if, in seeking possible solutions to the many social problems that arise every day, it never for an instant loses sight of the rules of that superhuman charity which Jesus Christ declared to be the distinguishing mark of his own; if, in a word, democracy is willing to be Christian, it will give your country a future of peace, prosperity and happiness.

If, on the contrary, it abandons itself to revolution and to socialism; if, deceived by mad illusions, it gives itself over to demands that destroy the fundamental laws on which all civil order rests, the immediate effect for the working class itself will be servitude, poverty and ruin.

Far from you, most dear sons, be such a dark prospect. Faithful to your baptism, it is in the light of faith that you judge and appraise the things of this life, a true pilgrimage from time to eternity. While elsewhere social questions trouble and torment the men of labour, you keep your souls in peace, trusting in those Christian employers who preside with such wisdom over your days of toil, who provide for your wages with such justice and fairness, and who at the same time instruct you in your rights and your duties by interpreting for you the great and salutary teachings of the Church and of her head.

Oh! may France see an ever greater number of employers like yours, and in particular like that Good Father who, for years now, has made it his happiness to lead you to Our feet! May you yourselves, by your example and, if need be, by your words, bring back to God and to the practice of the Christian virtues your companions who have gone astray, and enrich your country with phalanxes of workers like the one We have here before Our eyes. If it pleased the Lord to grant this wish, the salvation and prosperity of your nation would be assured, and she would not be slow to resume in the world the special place and the glorious mission that Providence had assigned to her.

Meanwhile, most dear sons, strive, by your spirit of humility, of discipline and of love of work, to show yourselves always worthy of your noble title of Christian workers. Love your employers, love one another. In the hours when the weight of your hard labours bears more heavily on your weary arms, strengthen your courage by looking towards heaven. Remember the divine Worker of Nazareth. He freely chose that humble condition, so as to be more intimately one of you, and to make divine, as it were, the work of the hands and the workshop. Above all, have frequent recourse to prayer, and never neglect your religious duties; they will be for you an ever fruitful source of consolation, of strength and of final perseverance.

It is as a pledge of these heavenly gifts and of Our particular affection that We grant with all Our heart, most dear sons, to all of you here present, to your parents, your families and your friends, the apostolic blessing.

THE WORKERS' PILGRIMAGE TO ROME

Audience of Leo XIII, 25 September 1899. Les Questions actuelles, vol. L (1899), p. 332-334

The French Workers' Pilgrimage was received in solemn audience by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII on Monday 25 September 1899. We reproduce the address read by Mr Léon Harmel and the reply of the Sovereign Pontiff, which was read by Mgr de Croy.

ADDRESS TO THE HOLY FATHER READ BY MR LÉON HARMEL

Most Holy Father,

In bringing the France du Travail for the sixth time to the feet of Your Holiness, we rejoice to be united with our brothers of the Pilgrimage of Penance to Jerusalem, led by our intrepid Fathers of the Assumption.

Our first duty is to proclaim our deep gratitude to our Master and King Jesus Christ, who has preserved Your life and who prolongs through the years a health so precious to the whole world, and above all to the workers.

Have You not lavished Your fatherly tenderness upon them? With the powerful authority of Your word and the irresistible logic of Your arguments, You have shown the moral and material uplifting of the masses of the people to be a duty of the social order.

In the face of many difficulties, You have never ceased to make Your voice heard throughout the world, to proclaim that rightfully, by virtue of justice and charity, a fitting place must be given to the well-being of the lower classes.

Thanks to Your solicitude, the immense multitude of the proletarians, who have an unconscious thirst for Jesus Christ, are beginning

once again to understand what should never have been forgotten, and what the Church has never ceased to instil into the Christian peoples: that the true spirit of the Gospel is not confined to the exercise of private virtues, to acts of purely religious piety, but that it also consists in effective help given to the little ones and the humble, through the practice of justice and brotherly love.

We often repeat it to the crowds of workers: “The Church is a Mother; while caring for the higher interest of souls, she makes it her duty to care for your temporal interests, taking in hand your legitimate aspirations for the honour and security of your homes, for the dignity and the fruitfulness of your work.”

And now You, who are the supreme Head of the Church, call into Your royal dwelling the humble delegates of the workers, to pour out Your heart into their hearts, to bend down towards them with love and to lavish on them Your fatherly solicitude.

And we, sons humbly and completely submissive to all Your directions, swear here to be everywhere the echo of Your liberating word, and to make people love in Your august person not only a tenderly affectionate Father, but also the infallible Doctor and the pilot of the nations.

We shall never cease to ask God to preserve You for the world and to console Your great heart by granting You the fulfilment of Your wishes. — To make our action and our prayers more effective, deign, Most Holy Father, to crown Your kindnesses by granting us the apostolic blessing.

LONG LIVE LEO XIII!

REPLY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIII

Most dear Sons,

It is a great joy for Us to see you again, brought back here once more by the spontaneous impulse of your filial love, and to find in

your ranks the pilgrims of the Pilgrimage of Penance returning from Jerusalem. They have joined you to pay Us homage, after venerating, under the guidance of the most distinguished Fathers of the Assumption, the lands sanctified by the life and death of the Redeemer.

Our joy has been increased still further on hearing the words you have just addressed to Us. He who spoke in your name offers Christian employers a rare example of kindness and wisdom; for many years you have hailed in him, more than in any other, the watchful friend, mindful of all your true interests.

As tenderly devoted sons, after expressing to God your gratitude for having, in his goodness, prolonged for Us the gift of life, you recall what Our fatherly solicitude has inspired in Us to raise, according to the rules of justice and charity, the moral and material condition of the workers.

Our greatest desire, indeed, is to make people see clearly in the Church the true mother of the peoples. Her affection knows no bounds: she guides souls towards heaven along the road of faith and virtue; but at the same time she takes care not to disdain the interests of time here on earth; she sanctifies them, when she ennobles the work of the humble and when she inclines the power of the highest to do good. If it is a question of maintaining the social order in the diversity of classes, she alone holds the secret of ensuring, even here below, as far as is possible, the happiness of all.

Continue, then, most dear sons; show a very special eagerness to remain faithful to the exhortations, the counsels and the precepts that We never tire of addressing to noble France, which are the proof of Our particular affection for her, and which, in these last days, We have just confirmed in a new Encyclical to Our clergy.

Unite closely on religious and social ground, in obedience to your bishops, full of confidence in your Christian employers; and all work together in harmony for the general good, for peace and for concord among all the classes, the essential condition of the happiness of

peoples and of the prosperity of nations. To be worthy of your title of true Catholic workers, use the power of example and of speech to bring back to Jesus Christ those who, in your dear country, have, to their misfortune, strayed from the adorable Master. It is thus that you will be able to console Our old age; it is thus that you will be able, for your part, to help avert the social calamities that threaten the future.

And now, carry once more to your fellow countrymen the remembrance of the common Father of the faithful. Carry to them the assurance of Our constant love: and as a pledge of choice graces, receive the blessing that We grant from Our heart to all of you here present, to your families, to your friends, and to the whole of France.

CHRISTIAN POPULAR ACTION

Audience of Pius X, 9 September 1904. Les Questions actuelles, vol. LXXV (1904), p. 162-163

Address read on Friday 9 September 1904 by Mr Léon Harmel (after a speech by Mgr Germain, Archbishop of Toulouse), at the audience granted by His Holiness Pius X to the members of the “Pilgrimage of the France du Travail”:

Most Holy Father,

For the fourteenth time, the Pilgrimage of the France du Travail to Rome lays at the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ the homage of its unchanging fidelity and its filial devotedness.

In keeping with the wish of Your predecessor, of venerated memory, we are striving to make these annual pilgrimages part of the nation’s habits, so as to bring about a closer rapprochement between France and the Papacy. We have here 585 men and women workers who live by the work of their hands, and many priests who devote themselves to the masses in order to bring them back into the fold of the Church.

We know how closely Your Holiness watches over Christian popular action, or Christian democracy. Your teachings and Your directions are and will be for us the sure guides of the road to follow.

France, the true France, still loves You with a truly filial ardour, Most Holy Father; nothing will detach her from the Vicar of Jesus Christ. The age-old bonds that unite them will be broken by no human force. France knows that she owes her pre-eminence in the world to the Catholic Church, and that her downfall would be the consequence of her apostasy.

Speak, then, Most Holy Father; our hearts are submissive to You. In our great country, souls thrill at the voice of the Pope, which, for

her, is the voice of God.

The Pope replied with a speech in Italian, of which Mgr Bisletti, Master of the Chamber, then read the French translation:

Welcome, most dear sons, who come for the fourteenth time to venerate the tomb of the Apostles and to comfort the successor of Peter by your presence.

We thank you, Your Grace, for having been so good as to place yourself at the head of this pilgrimage and for having expressed to Us in such noble terms the feelings that animate the Catholics of France. We cannot tell you, dear pilgrims, how pleasing to Us is the homage of your fidelity and your devotedness. This fidelity and this devotedness you show not only in words, but in deeds; you heed, even at the cost of considerable sacrifices, the recommendations of Our venerated predecessor, who wished to see the representatives of the France du Travail at the Vatican every year.

We are happy that you put into practice, in Christian Popular Action, the teachings of the Holy Apostolic See, which are the very teachings of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our satisfaction is increased still further by the fact that you take as the foundation of all your works, as We are assured, the holy fear of God, the observance of his divine law, the practice of the Christian virtues and the frequenting of the sacraments. Be well convinced of it, most dear sons: unless it is the Lord who builds the house, in vain do they labour who lay stone upon stone to raise it; unless it is the Lord who guards the city, in vain do the soldiers keep watch to defend it against the threats of the enemy, and all labour is useless without the blessing of God.

Descendants of those sons of France who were faithful to the Church, devoted without reserve to the chair of Peter, always ready to defend and spread what is true and good, do not be degenerate heirs. Through the difficulties and sacrifices that you must face, above all today, be always generous, in the certainty that in this way you

are working not only for your own happiness, but also for the prosperity of your country.

History, indeed, is there to prove it: the times when France attained the splendours of glory, when she shed upon her children, together with the pure joys of peace, the advantages of the most real prosperity, were those when she listened to the salutary counsels of the Church. In the shadow of that banner which led her to victory, she deserved the glorious title of Eldest Daughter of the Church, and she exercised the benefits of her influence throughout the whole world. The Church was always happy to applaud that glory lovingly. Must We repeat it to you, most dear sons? This love of the Holy See for your country is always, and in spite of everything, alive in Our heart. And if it is necessary, We shall accept suffering yet again to secure the good and the greatness of your country.

Taught by the lessons of the past, enlightened about the dangers of the present, drawing your inspiration above all from the precepts of your faith, hold ever more closely to the Church and to the Apostolic See, sure of thereby attaining true prosperity. It is by this means that you will bring down upon yourselves and upon your country the blessings of heaven and that you will hasten the return of less sad and less troubled days.

In this hope, and as a pledge of Our affection, We grant with all Our heart to your venerated bishops, to your clergy, to yourselves, to your families, to your works and to the whole of France, the apostolic blessing.