

E SUPREMI

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS X ON THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS IN CHRIST

OCTOBER 4, 1903

To the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and the Apostolic Benediction

In addressing you for the first time from the Chair of the supreme apostolate to which We have, by the inscrutable disposition of God, been elevated, it is not necessary to remind you with what tears and warm instance We exerted Ourselves to ward off this formidable burden of the Pontificate. Unequal in merit though We be with St. Anselm, it seems to us that We may with truth make Our own the words in which he lamented when he was constrained against his will and in spite of his struggles to receive the honor of the episcopate. For to show with what dispositions of mind and will We subjected Ourselves to the most serious charge of feeding the flock of Christ, We can well adduce those same proofs of grief which he invokes in his own behalf. "My tears are witnesses," he wrote, "and the sounds and moanings issuing from the anguish of my heart, such as I never remember before to have come from me for any sorrow, before that day on which there seemed to fall upon me that great misfortune of the archbishop of Canterbury. And those who fixed their gaze on my face that day could not fail to see it . . . I, in color more like a dead than a living man, was pale for amazement and alarm. Hitherto I have resisted as far as I could, speaking the truth, my election or rather the violence done me. But now I am constrained to confess, whether I will or no, that the judgments of God oppose greater and greater resistance to my efforts, so that I see no way of escaping them. Wherefore vanquished as I am by the violence not so much of men as of God, against which there is no providing, I realize that nothing is left for me, after having prayed as much as I could and striven that this chalice should if possible pass from me without my drinking it, but to set aside my feeling and my will and resign myself entirely to the design and the will of God."

2. In truth reasons both numerous and most weighty were not lacking to justify this resistance of Ours. For, beside the fact that We deemed Ourselves altogether unworthy through Our littleness of the honor of the Pontificate; who would not have been disturbed at seeing himself designated to succeed him who, ruling the Church with supreme wisdom for nearly twenty-six years, showed himself adorned with such sublimity of mind, such luster of every virtue. as to attract to himself the admiration even of adversaries, and to leave his memory stamped in glorious achievements. Then again, to omit other motives, We were terrified beyond all else by the disastrous state of human society today. For who can fail to see that society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep-rooted malady which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is dragging it to destruction? You understand, Venerable Brethren, what this disease is -- apostasy from God, than which in truth nothing is more allied with ruin, according to the word of the Prophet: "For behold they that go far from Thee shall perish" (Ps. lxxii., 17). We saw therefore that, in virtue of the ministry of the Pontificate, which was to be entrusted to Us, We must hasten to find a remedy for this great evil, considering as addressed to Us that Divine command: "Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over kingdoms, to root

up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant" (Jerem. i., 10). But, cognizant of Our weakness, We recoiled in terror from a task as urgent as it is arduous.

4. Since, however, it has been pleasing to the Divine Will to raise Our lowliness to such sublimity of power, We take courage in Him who strengthens Us; and setting Ourselves to work, relying on the power of God, We proclaim that We have no other program in the Supreme Pontificate but that "of restoring all things in Christ" (Ephes. i., 10), so that "Christ may be all and in all" (Coloss. iii., 2). Some will certainly be found who, measuring Divine things by human standards will seek to discover secret aims of Ours, distorting them to an earthly scope and to partisan designs. To eliminate all vain delusions for such, We say to them with emphasis that We do not wish to be, and with the Divine assistance never shall be aught before human society but the Minister of God, of whose authority We are the depository. The interests of God shall be Our interest, and for these We are resolved to spend all Our strength and Our very life. Hence, should anyone ask Us for a symbol as the expression of Our will, We will give this and no other: "To renew all things in Christ." In undertaking this glorious task, We are greatly quickened by the certainty that We shall have all of you, Venerable Brethren, as generous co-operators. Did We doubt it We should have to regard you, unjustly, as either unconscious or heedless of that sacrilegious war which is now, almost everywhere, stirred up and fomented against God. For in truth, "The nations have raged and the peoples imagined vain things" (Ps. ii., 1.) against their Creator, so frequent is the cry of the enemies of God: "Depart from us" (Job. xxi., 14). And as might be expected we find extinguished among the majority of men all respect for the Eternal God, and no regard paid in the manifestations of public and private life to the Supreme Will -- nay, every effort and every artifice is used to destroy utterly the memory and the knowledge of God.

5. When all this is considered there is good reason to fear lest this great perversity may be as it were a foretaste, and perhaps the beginning of those evils which are reserved for the last days; and that there may be already in the world the "Son of Perdition" of whom the Apostle speaks (II. Thess. ii., 3). Such, in truth, is the audacity and the wrath employed everywhere in persecuting religion, in combating the dogmas of the faith, in brazen effort to uproot and destroy all relations between man and the Divinity! While, on the other hand, and this according to the same apostle is the distinguishing mark of Antichrist, man has with infinite temerity put himself in the place of God, raising himself above all that is called God; in such wise that although he cannot utterly extinguish in himself all knowledge of God, he has contemned God's majesty and, as it were, made of the universe a temple wherein he himself is to be adored. "He sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God" (II. Thess. ii., 2).

6. Verily no one of sound mind can doubt the issue of this contest between man and the Most High. Man, abusing his liberty, can violate the right and the majesty of the Creator of the Universe; but the victory will ever be with God -- nay, defeat is at hand at the moment when man, under the delusion of his triumph, rises up with most audacity. Of this we are assured in the holy books by God Himself. Unmindful, as it were, of His strength and greatness, He "overlooks the sins of men" (Wisd. xi., 24), but swiftly, after these apparent retreats, "awaked like a mighty man that hath been surfeited with wine" (Ps. Ixxvii., 65), "He shall break the heads of his enemies" (Ps. Ixvii., 22), that all may know "that God is the king of all the earth" (Ib. Ixvi., 8), "that the Gentiles may know themselves to be men" (Ib. ix., 20).

7. All this, Venerable Brethren, We believe and expect with unshakable faith. But this does not prevent us also, according to the measure given to each, from exerting ourselves to hasten the work of God -- and not merely by praying assiduously: "Arise, O Lord, let not man be strengthened" (Ib. ix., 19), but, more important still, by affirming both by word and deed and in the light of day, God's supreme dominion over man and all things, so that His right to command and His authority may be fully realized and respected. This is imposed upon us not only as a natural duty, but by our common interest. For, Venerable Brethren, who can avoid being appalled and afflicted when he beholds, in the midst of a

progress in civilization which is justly extolled, the greater part of mankind fighting among themselves so savagely as to make it seem as though strife were universal? The desire for peace is certainly harbored in every breast, and there is no one who does not ardently invoke it. But to want peace without God is an absurdity, seeing that where God is absent thence too justice flies, and when justice is taken away it is vain to cherish the hope of peace. "Peace is the work of justice" (Is. xxii., 17). There are many, We are well aware, who, in their yearning for peace, that is for the tranquillity of order, band themselves into societies and parties, which they style parties of order. Hope and labor lost. For there is but one party of order capable of restoring peace in the midst of all this turmoil, and that is the party of God. It is this party, therefore, that we must advance, and to it attract as many as possible, if we are really urged by the love of peace.

8. But, Venerable Brethren, we shall never, however much we exert ourselves, succeed in calling men back to the majesty and empire of God, except by means of Jesus Christ. "No one," the Apostle admonishes us, "can lay other foundation than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ." (I. Cor., iii., II.) It is Christ alone "whom the Father sanctified and sent into this world" (Is. x., 36), "the splendor of the Father and the image of His substance" (Hebr. i., 3), true God and true man: without whom nobody can know God with the knowledge for salvation, "neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him." (Matth. xi., 27.) Hence it follows that to restore all things in Christ and to lead men back to submission to God is one and the same aim. To this, then, it behoves Us to devote Our care -- to lead back mankind under the dominion of Christ; this done, We shall have brought it back to God. When We say to God We do not mean to that inert being heedless of all things human which the dream of materialists has imagined, but to the true and living God, one in nature, triple in person, Creator of the world, most wise Ordainer of all things, Lawgiver most just, who punishes the wicked and has reward in store for virtue.

9. Now the way to reach Christ is not hard to find: it is the Church. Rightly does Chrysostom inculcate: "The Church is thy hope, the Church is thy salvation, the Church is thy refuge." ("Hom. de capto Euthropio," n. 6.) It was for this that Christ founded it, gaining it at the price of His blood, and made it the depository of His doctrine and His laws, bestowing upon it at the same time an inexhaustible treasury of graces for the sanctification and salvation of men.

You see, then, Venerable Brethren, the duty that has been imposed alike upon Us and upon you of bringing back to the discipline of the Church human society, now estranged from the wisdom of Christ; the Church will then subject it to Christ, and Christ to God. If We, through the goodness of God Himself, bring this task to a happy issue, We shall be rejoiced to see evil giving place to good, and hear, for our gladness, " a loud voice from heaven saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ." (Apoc. xii., 10.) But if our desire to obtain this is to be fulfilled, we must use every means and exert all our energy to bring about the utter disappearance of the enormous and detestable wickedness, so characteristic of our time -- the substitution of man for God; this done, it remains to restore to their ancient place of honor the most holy laws and counsels of the gospel; to proclaim aloud the truths taught by the Church, and her teachings on the sanctity of marriage, on the education and discipline of youth, on the possession and use of property, the duties that men owe to those who rule the State; and lastly to restore equilibrium between the different classes of society according to Christian precept and custom. This is what We, in submitting Ourselves to the manifestations of the Divine will, purpose to aim at during Our Pontificate, and We will use all our industry to attain it. It is for you, Venerable Brethren, to second Our efforts by your holiness, knowledge and experience and above all by your zeal for the glory of God, with no other aim than that Christ may be formed in all.

10. As to the means to be employed in attaining this great end, it seems superfluous to name them, for they are obvious of themselves. Let your first care be to form Christ in those who are destined from the duty of their vocation to form Him in others. We speak of the priests, Venerable Brethren. For all who bear the seal of the priesthood must know that they have the same mission to the people in the midst of whom they live as that which Paul proclaimed that he received in these tender words: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv., 19). But how will they be able to perform this duty if they be not first clothed with Christ themselves? and so clothed with Christ as to be able to say with the Apostle: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Ibid. ii., 20). "For me to live is Christ" (Phlipp. i., 21). Hence although all are included in the exhortation "to advance towards the perfect man, in the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ" (Ephes. iv., 3), it is addressed before all others to those who exercise the sacerdotal ministry; thus these are called another Christ, not merely by the communication of power but by reason of the imitation of His works, and they should therefore bear stamped upon themselves the image of Christ.

11. This being so, Venerable Brethren, of what nature and magnitude is the care that must be taken by you in forming the clergy to holiness! All other tasks must yield to this one. Wherefore the chief part of your diligence will be directed to governing and ordering your seminaries aright so that they may flourish equally in the soundness of their teaching and in the spotlessness of their morals. Regard your seminary as the delight of your hearts, and neglect on its behalf none of those provisions which the Council of Trent has with admirable forethought prescribed. And when the time comes for promoting the youthful candidates to holy orders, ah! do not forget what Paul wrote to Timothy: "Impose not hands lightly upon any man" (I. Tim. v., 22), bearing carefully in mind that as a general rule the faithful will be such as are those whom you call to the priesthood. Do not then pay heed to private interests of any kind, but have at heart only God and the Church and the eternal welfare of souls so that, as the Apostle admonishes, "you may not be partakers of the sins of others" (Ibid.). Then again be not lacking in solicitude for young priests who have just left the seminary. From the bottom of Our heart, We urge you to bring them often close to your breast, which should burn with celestial fire -- kindle them, inflame them, so that they may aspire solely after God and the salvation of souls. Rest assured, Venerable Brethren, that We on Our side will use the greatest diligence to prevent the members of the clergy from being drawn to the snares of a certain new and fallacious science, which savoureth not of Christ, but with masked and cunning arguments strives to open the door to the errors of rationalism and semi-rationalism; against which the Apostle warned Timothy to be on his guard, when he wrote: "Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelties of words, and oppositions of knowledge falsely so called which some promising have erred concerning the faith" (I. Tim. vi., 20 s.). This does not prevent Us from esteeming worthy of praise those young priests who dedicated themselves to useful studies in every branch of learning the better to prepare themselves to defend the truth and to refute the calumnies of the enemies of the faith. Yet We cannot conceal, nay, We proclaim in the most open manner possible that Our preference is, and ever will be, for those who, while cultivating ecclesiastical and literary erudition, dedicate themselves more closely to the welfare of souls through the exercise of those ministries proper to a priest jealous of the divine glory. "It is a great grief and a continual sorrow to our heart" (Rom. ix., 2) to find Jeremiah's lamentation applicable to our times: "The little ones asked for bread, and there was none to break it to them" (Lam. iv., 4). For there are not lacking among the clergy those who adapt themselves according to their bent to works of more apparent than real solidity -- but not so numerous perhaps are those who, after the example of Christ, take to themselves the words of the Prophet: "The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me, hath sent me to evangelize the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to announce freedom to the captive, and sight to the blind" (Luke iv., 18-19).

12. Yet who can fail to see, Venerable Brethren, that while men are led by reason and liberty, the principal way to restore the empire of God in their souls is religious instruction? How many there are

who mimic Christ and abhor the Church and the Gospel more through ignorance than through badness of mind, of whom it may well be said: "They blaspheme whatever things they know not" (Jude ii., 10). This is found to be the case not only among the people at large and among the lowest classes, who are thus easily led astray, but even among the more cultivated and among those endowed moreover with uncommon education. The result is for a great many the loss of the faith. For it is not true that the progress of knowledge extinguishes the faith; rather is it ignorance, and the more ignorance prevails the greater is the havoc wrought by incredulity. And this is why Christ commanded the Apostles: "Going forth teach all nations" (Matth. xxviii., 19).

13. But in order that the desired fruit may be derived from this apostolate and this zeal for teaching, and that Christ may be formed in all, be it remembered, Venerable Brethren, that no means is more efficacious than charity. "For the Lord is not in the earthquake" (III Kings xix., II) -- it is vain to hope to attract souls to God by a bitter zeal. On the contrary, harm is done more often than good by taunting men harshly with their faults, and reproving their vices with asperity. True the Apostle exhorted Timothy: "Accuse, beseech, rebuke," but he took care to add: "with all patience" (11. Tim. iv., 2). Jesus has certainly left us examples of this. "Come to me," we find Him saying, "come to me all ye that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you" (Matth. xi., 28). And by those that labor and are burdened he meant only those who are slaves of sin and error. What gentleness was that shown by the Divine Master! What tenderness, what compassion towards all kinds of misery! Isaias has marvelously described His heart in the words: "I will set my spirit upon him; he shall not contend, nor cry out; the bruised reed he will not break, he will not extinguish the smoking flax" (Is. xlii., 1, s.). This charity, "patient and kind" (1. Cor. xiii., 4.), will extend itself also to those who are hostile to us and persecute us. "We are reviled," thus did St. Paul protest, "and we bless; we are persecuted and we suffer it; we are blasphemed and we entreat" (1. Cor., iv., 12, s.). They perhaps seem to be worse than they really are. Their associations with others, prejudice, the counsel, advice and example of others, and finally an ill-advised shame have dragged them to the side of the impious; but their wills are not so depraved as they themselves would seek to make people believe. Who will prevent us from hoping that the flame of Christian charity may dispel the darkness from their minds and bring to them light and the peace of God? It may be that the fruit of our labors may be slow in coming, but charity wearies not with waiting, knowing that God prepares His rewards not for the results of toil but for the good will shown in it.

14. It is true, Venerable Brethren, that in this arduous task of the restoration of the human race in Christ neither you nor your clergy should exclude all assistance. We know that God recommended every one to have a care for his neighbor (Eccli. xvii., 12). For it is not priests alone, but all the faithful without exception, who must concern themselves with the interests of God and souls -- not, of course, according to their own views, but always under the direction and orders of the bishops; for to no one in the Church except you is it given to preside over, to teach, to "govern the Church of God which the Holy Ghost has placed you to rule" (Acts xx., 28). Our predecessors have long since approved and blessed those Catholics who have banded together in societies of various kinds, but always religious in their aim. We, too, have no hesitation in awarding Our praise to this great idea, and We earnestly desire to see it propagated and flourish in town and country. But We wish that all such associations aim first and chiefly at the constant maintenance of Christian life, among those who belong to them. For truly it is of little avail to discuss questions with nice subtlety, or to discourse eloquently of rights and duties, when all this is unconnected with practice. The times we live in demand action -- but action which consists entirely in observing with fidelity and zeal the divine laws and the precepts of the Church, in the frank and open profession of religion, in the exercise of every kind of charitable works, without regard to selfinterest or worldly advantage. Such luminous examples given by the great army of soldiers of Christ will be of much greater avail in moving and drawing men than words and sublime dissertations; and it will easily come about that when human respect has been driven out, and prejudices and doubting laid aside, large numbers will be won to Christ, becoming in their turn promoters of His knowledge and love which are

the road to true and solid happiness. Oh! when in every city and village the law of the Lord is faithfully observed, when respect is shown for sacred things, when the Sacraments are frequented, and the ordinances of Christian life fulfilled, there will certainly be no more need for us to labor further to see all things restored in Christ. Nor is it for the attainment of eternal welfare alone that this will be of service -- it will also contribute largely to temporal welfare and the advantage of human society. For when these conditions have been secured, the upper and wealthy classes will learn to be just and charitable to the lowly, and these will be able to bear with tranquillity and patience the trials of a very hard lot; the citizens will obey not lust but law, reverence and love will be deemed a duty towards those that govern, "whose power comes only from God" (Rom. xiii., 1). And then? Then, at last, it will be clear to all that the Church, such as it was instituted by Christ, must enjoy full and entire liberty and independence from all foreign dominion; and We, in demanding that same liberty, are defending not only the sacred rights of religion, but are also consulting the common weal and the safety of nations. For it continues to be true that "piety is useful for all things" (I. Tim. iv., 8) -- when this is strong and flourishing "the people will" truly "sit in the fullness of peace" (Is. xxxii., 18).

15. May God, "who is rich in mercy" (Ephes. ii., 4), benignly speed this restoration of the human race in Jesus Christ for "it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix., 16). And let us, Venerable Brethren, "in the spirit of humility" (Dan. iii., 39), with continuous and urgent prayer ask this of Him through the merits of Jesus Christ. Let us turn, too, to the most powerful intercession of the Divine Mother -- to obtain which We, addressing to you this Letter of Ours on the day appointed especially for commemorating the Holy Rosary, ordain and confirm all Our Predecessor's prescriptions with regard to the dedication of the present month to the august Virgin, by the public recitation of the Rosary in all churches; with the further exhortation that as intercessors with God appeal be also made to the most pure Spouse of Mary, the Patron of the Catholic Church, and the holy Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul.

16. And that all this may be realized in fulfillment of Our ardent desire, and that everything may be prosperous with you, We invoke upon you the most bountiful gifts of divine grace. And now in testimony of that most tender charity wherewith We embrace you and all the faithful whom Divine Providence has entrusted to Us, We impart with all affection in the Lord, the Apostolic Blessing to you, Venerable Brethren, to the clergy and to your people.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, on the 4th day of October, 1903, in the first year of Our Pontificate.