

NOVA IMPENDET ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS XI ON THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Pius XI

Health, Venerable Brethren, and the Apostolic Blessing.

A new scourge threatens - indeed, it has already in large measure smitten - the flock entrusted to Us. It strikes most heavily at those who are the most tender and are Our most dearly beloved; upon the children, the proletariat, the artisans and the "have-nots." [1] We are speaking of the grave financial crisis which weighs down the peoples and is accelerating in every land the frightful increase of Unemployment. We behold multitudes of honest workers condemned to idleness and want, when all they desire is opportunity to earn for themselves and their families that daily bread which the divine command bids them ask of their Father Who is in heaven. Their cry is in Our ears; and it moves Us to repeat, with the same tenderness and pity, those words which broke from the most loving Heart of the Divine Master when He beheld the crowd fainting with hunger: "I have compassion on the multitude" (Mark viii, 2).

2. More vehement still becomes Our commiseration as we gaze at the multitude of little children who "ask for bread when there is no one to break it for them" (Jer. Thren. iv, 4). These little ones, in their innocence, are bearing the worst of the burden. Squalid and wretched, [2] they are condemned to watch the vanishing of the joys proper to their age, and to have their rightful laughter hushed upon their young lips as they gaze with bewilderment around them.

3. Winter draws on apace, with all its train of those sufferings and privations which cold weather inflicts upon the poor, and especially upon their young children. There is every reason to fear that the plague of Unemployment, which We have already mentioned, will worsen, to such an extent that poverty may push - though God forbid it! - many a misery-stricken household to exasperation.

4. These things Our fatherly heart cannot behold without anxiety. Therefore, as Our predecessors have done in like circumstances, especially Our immediate predecessor, Benedict XV, of holy memory, We raise Our voice and direct Our appeal to all those in whom Faith and Christian charity are lively. Our call is to a Crusade of charity and of succour which, by caring for bodies and comforting souls, will bring to pass a re-birth of quiet confidence, will put to flight the deadly [3] counsels which misery engenders, and will quench the flames of hate and passion putting in their place the ardours of love and of concern to the end that the peoples, linked in the noble bond of peace, may move forward towards individual and collective prosperity.

5. It is then to a Crusade of piety and of love - and no doubt, of sacrifices also - that We rally all the sons of the one Father, all the members of the one great family, which is the family of God Himself. It belongs to the sons and to those members of the one family to share not only in the common joys, but also in the common sorrows.

6. To this Crusade We summon all, as to a sacred duty. For Charity is a formal commandment of the evangelical law which Jesus Himself proclaimed as the first and greatest commandment, including and summing up all the others. In days of War and of implacable hatreds, Our immediate predecessor so strongly and so often inculcated Charity that it became the mark of his pontificate. And now We also would put all men in mind of the same most gentle precept: not only because it is the supreme duty, embodying all other precepts of the New Law, but also because it is the highest ideal which can be set before generous souls, desirous of attaining to Christian perfection.

7. We believe, without many words, that only this generosity from the heart, only this fervour of Christian souls eagerly expressing itself in self-sacrificing devotion to the brethren (especially to those most in need, such as the multitude of innocent children) will succeed, by a grand and unanimous effort, in overcoming the grave difficulties of the present hour.

8. As an effect of rivalry between peoples there is an insensate competition in armaments which, in its turn, becomes the cause of enormous expenditure, diverting large sums of money from the public welfare; and this makes the present crisis more acute. Therefore We cannot refrain from renewing and from making Our own the solemn warnings of Our

predecessor (Adhortatio Des le. debut, 1 Aug., 1917) which have, alas! not been heeded, as well as Our own words (Alloc. die 24, Dec., 1930: Litt. Aut. Con vivo piacere, 7 Apr., 1922), We exhort you all, Venerable Brethren, to busy yourselves with the work of enlightening public opinion in this matter, by all the means at your disposal, including both pulpit and press, so that the hearts of men may be turned towards the dictates of right reason, and, still more, to the laws of Christ.

9. It rejoices Us to think that each of you will become a confluence of the charity and generosity flowing in from your faithful children, and that you will become also the centres from which the alms offered to you will be distributed. In dioceses where this will be more convenient We see no objection to your joining forces with your respective Metropolitans, or even with some charitable organization which has given proof of its efficiency and enjoys your confidence.

10. But, seeing that mere human effort is insufficient without the aid of divine grace, let all of us send up fervent prayers to the Author of All Good, so that He, in His infinite pity, may shorten this time of tribulation. And especially let us pray for those of our brethren who are in distress, and let us repeat with more earnestness than ever before the prayer which Jesus Himself has taught us: "Give us this day our daily bread."

11. Let all of us remember, as a spur and as a consolation, that the Divine Redeemer will cherish what we do for His poor as if we have done it for Himself (Matt. xxv. 40), and that, according to another of His comforting words, to receive a little child for the love of Jesus is the same as receiving Jesus Himself (Matt. xviii, 5).

12. The Feast[4] which the Church keeps today recalls to Us, as a fitting end to these Our exhortations, those moving words of Jesus Who, after having (as St. John Chrysostom expresses it) built up impregnable ramparts around the souls of the little ones, added: "See that you despise not one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven behold always the face of my Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii, 10). Assuredly, those will be the selfsame angels who, in heaven, will present to the Lord all the acts of charity wrought by generous hearts on behalf of little children, and they, in their turn, will obtain abundant blessings for those who have spent themselves in so holy a cause.

13. Soon will be celebrated the annual solemnities of Christ the King, Whose reign and Whose peace We have heralded and prayed for[5] from the outset of Our pontificate. It seems to Us that it will be timely to prepare for the Feast by solemn tridua in the parish churches, whereby to implore from the God of Mercies celestial counsels and the gifts of peace. In pledge thereof We send to you, Venerable Brethren, as well as to all who shall respond to Our appeal, the Apostolic Blessing.

Given at Rome, by St. Peter's, on the second day of October (Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels) in the year MDCCCCXXI, being the tenth of Our pontificate.

PIUS XI

1. Proletariam plebem opifices eosque omnes qui rei familiaris copia non affluunt.

2. Miseria squalentes.

3. Funestissima.

4. The Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels.

5. Ominati ac comprecati sumus.

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