

LETTER ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE CHURCH IN IRELAND

Leo XIII

Although all and every part of the Lord's flock entrusted to our care we embrace with deep affection and love, nevertheless, our concern and thoughts go out above all to those we see suffering misfortune. Truly, we experience the natural feeling of parents who suffer greater anxiety for and are more protective of those of their children who have been struck by adversity. We, accordingly, have always been moved with exceptional sympathy and the most kindly consideration for the Catholics of Ireland so violently and constantly tried by long and lasting hardships. Their remarkable steadfastness in patient endurance has always aroused our deepest esteem, for no tribulation has ever been able to destroy or diminish the faith that is the gift of their fathers.

2. We have admonished them repeatedly and finally sent our decree because we saw that our advice and our decree were consonant with truth and justice, on the one hand, and would benefit your affairs, on the other. We could never intend to harm in any way the cause of Ireland with interference that rightfully could be censured.

3. Indeed, as a testimony of our good will towards the Irish, we are sending you gifts of vestments, vessels and ornaments that are a part of sacred furnishings. These we assign to the Cathedral Churches of Ireland to enhance the beauty of the House of God and divine worship. Other gifts, less precious, that we purified with our blessing, are for the sake of personal piety and are to be given to private persons whom we shall clearly and carefully designate.

4. We are in no doubt that it is more and more evident that our fatherly love for the Irish has never changed. They, to be sure, will become more deserving of this love if they continue obedient to and trusting in us, heedfully guarding against the treacherous who do not hesitate to distort our counsel by false interpretation and, if it were possible, destroy their glorious allegiance to the Catholic Church, which they have received as their greatest and most noble heritage.

5. We pray for every best gift of heavenly grace for you, venerable brother, clergy and the faithful whom you serve and the whole of Ireland, and lovingly impart our Apostolic Blessing.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, 21 December, 1888, in the eleventh year of Our pontificate.

LEO XIII

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