

CARITATIS ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE CHURCH IN POLAND

Leo XIII

From time to time We have sent the bishops of other Catholic nations individual letters as tokens of Our love and providence; We have long desired to find an opportunity to do the same for you. Indeed We cherish you, a people who differ in nationality, speech, and religious rite, with the same zeal, as We have demonstrated at other times. The thought of you reminds Us of your distinguished deeds and your devotion and confidence in Us. Your fathers deserve exceptional praise. When all of Europe was trembling with fear at the attacks of the powerful enemies of the Christian name, your fathers were the first to offer their lives in remarkable defensive battles, as they guarded the civil and religious order. Only a few months ago We publicly commemorated their merits. This was when a number of you led a group of the faithful in pilgrimage to greet Us and congratulate Us. At this beautiful testimony of faith, We had the delightful opportunity to congratulate the Polish nation on the glory of their ancestral faith, which lives vigorously despite so many and such difficult trials. We send this letter now so that a declaration of Our solicitude for you may become known to the Church and so that your labors for the Catholic faith may be encouraged to continue. We know what zealous interpreters of Our will and devoted servants you are. Further, We know how determined you are to safeguard and increase your flock. May God grant the fruits We desire in this matter since He has prompted Us to speak.

Benefits of Religion

2. The blessings of divine truth and grace, which Christ brought to the human race by His religion, are so excellent and useful that it cannot be compared, much less equated, with any other. The excellence of its blessings is manifold and wholesome. In a wonderful manner it inundates both individuals and nations, and both domestic and civil society, promoting prosperity in this passing life and the acquisition of immortal life. It immediately follows from this that nations blessed with the gift of the Catholic religion are bound by the greatest of all obligations to love and cherish it, since they have received the greatest of all blessings. At the same time it is evident that this is not a matter which each person or each state can submit to its own judgment. The divine Author of religion has defined and commanded how and by what discipline this must be done, namely under the leadership and guidance of the Catholic Church. He established this Church as the pillar and mainstay of the truth⁽¹⁾ which by His singular help has flourished through all ages and will continue to flourish always, according to His promise, Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.⁽²⁾

Ancestors' Adherence to Religion

3. The illustrious respect for religion you inherited from your ancestors and elders remained stable because your nation has always adhered to the Church with the firmest faith and because it remained obedient to the Roman Pontiffs and to their bishops. Be grateful for the many benefits and advantages, including comfort and help, you have received until now. The advantages of regarding the Church highly are obvious, as are the consequences of condemning it. The teachings and laws of the Gospel advance the salvation and perfection of man both in faith and knowledge, as well as in practice and conduct of life. By the divine law of Christ, the Church can hand down and consecrate that doctrine and law; for that reason, she has great power to guide human society in which she promotes noble virtues and produces the choicest blessings.

Precepts and Regulations

4. But the Church is so far removed from appropriating to herself by the great extent of her authority anything of another's rights or of winking at devious means, that she often indulgently cedes her own rights. In her wise equity she shows herself to all, both the highly placed and the lowly, as a kind governess and a solicitous mother. Therefore those men act unjustly in this matter who strive to revive against her old calumnies, so often refuted and entirely worn out, making of them a new kind of reproach. Nor are those less blameworthy who mistrust the Church for the same reason and kindle suspicion against her among the governors of states and among the legislators, from whom she truly deserves

much praise and thanksgiving. For she teaches and commands nothing at all that could in any way impede or oppose the majesty of princes or the safety and progress of the people. Rather she diligently proposes many things from Christian wisdom that are conducive to their common advantage. Among those worthy of mention are: that persons who hold the supreme power are considered likenesses of the divine power and providence; that their rule must be just and tempered with paternal goodness in imitation of the divine and that it ought to look solely to the benefit of the state; that sometime they shall have to render an account to God the Judge, and this will be the more severe in proportion to the greater dignity of their office; also that those subject to authority ought always to reverence and trust their princes and obey them not only because of wrath but also for conscience sake (3) since God exercises His rule by means of men; that the subjects also ought to make supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings(4) for their rulers; that they ought to submit to the holy discipline of the state, abstain from the societies and machinations of the wicked and do nothing seditious; that they ought to devote themselves to the maintenance of a tranquil peace in justice. Where these and other Evangelical precepts and regulations which the Church promotes are valued and actually in force, they never cease to bring forth excellent fruits. These fruits are more plentiful in those nations in which the Church exercises more freely the prerogatives of her office. But to oppose those precepts and refuse the leadership of the Church is the same as to oppose the divine will and to reject a remarkable blessing. Then nothing truly favorable and good remains in the city; everything collapses and fear of calamity haunts both rulers and ruled. Indeed We had already written to you at length on these topics, but We thought it good to recall them so that you may strive more vigorously and successfully. It will certainly be advantageous for your flocks if the spirit of turbulent men daring to overturn temporal powers is guarded against, if the duties of good citizens are not ignored, and if from faith in God, faith in the state and its leaders may blossom.

Parents' Obligation for Educating Their Children

5. Increase your diligence concerning domestic society, the education of youths and of priests, and the best manner of teaching Christian love. The soundness and honor of domestic life, from which health flows into the veins of civil society, must be sought first in the sanctity of marriage, which is indivisible when entered into according to the precepts of God and of the Church. In the next place it is necessary that the rights and duties between the spouses be inviolate and, as far as possible, supported by the greatest possible love and harmony. Parents must provide protection and advantages for their children, especially education. The best and most efficacious example for the children is the lives of their parents. Parents must realize that they can provide for their education properly and well only by exercising great vigilance. In choosing schools and colleges, they must avoid not only those where errors concerning religion are deliberately interspersed with the teaching, or where impiety reigns, but also those that consider Christian culture and morals inappropriate for instruction and offer no courses in them. For those, surely, whose talents are developed by letters and the arts also need to be taught the knowledge of and reverence for divine things. Nature itself admonishes that they must serve God even more than the state; in serving the state, they must direct their steps toward their permanent homeland in heaven. They must keep this goal in mind as they grow older and advance in civil culture both because youths today are urged to a greater desire for knowledge, and because they are exposed daily to great dangers to their faith. The great losses we have suffered prove this. Now concerning the manner of teaching sacred doctrine, concerning the worthiness and knowledge of professors, and concerning the selection of books, the Church reserves her right to prescribe certain things. Nor can she fail to do so since she is bound by a most serious duty to see to it that nothing harmful to the well-being of the faith creeps in and injures the Christian people. The lessons which are taught in churches and meeting places advocating that the seeds of faith and love be nourished and grow should complement and strengthen the sacred instruction which is given in the schools.

Requirements of Seminaries

6. All these things indicate that exceptional diligence is needed in the education of clerics for according to the word of God, they are "the salt of the earth and the Light of the world. Every praiseworthy quality which is joined to sound doctrine and holiness of life ought to be carefully nurtured in the young clergy and is no less necessary for the older clergy who labor for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.(5) We know that in the seminaries your labors are not lacking. So rather than offer admonition, it is fitting to commend you and

all those in whose work of teaching and administration the seminaries rejoice. Surely in times which are so difficult for the Church, when the enemies of truth grow strong, when the pestilence of corruption no longer creeps in the dark but impudently parades everywhere, more remedies are required than before; these must come from the clergy in the form of greater effort in the good fight for faith and virtue.

Curriculum

7. In the matter of directing studies, We have repeatedly given directives with regard to philosophical, theological, and biblical studies. Insist that professors conform to them, but at the same time do not let them neglect any of the other important teachings. Also insist that those who are charged with order and piety (they must be men outstanding for their integrity and prudence) so moderate the discipline of common life and so develop and exercise the spirits of the students that their progress in the appropriate virtues becomes daily more apparent. Under this head also comes the prudence they must learn concerning matters relevant to the civil power. Surely in this manner a new militia will come forth from the schools as if from an athletic arena or a fortress; it will be well-equipped to aid those laboring in the dust and heat and to replace those who are worn out and aged. You can easily see that virtue is exposed to much danger in the performance of the holy ministry and that it is human to grow slack in work and to give up. Therefore offer your priests opportunities to recall and increase their knowledge by study, especially so that, with their spiritual strength renewed, they can more zealously devote their time to their own perfection and bring about the eternal salvation of others. Venerable Brethren, when you have such a clergy, you will realize that your pastoral burden will not only be lightened, but will abound in the desired fruit for the flock. We may hope for an abundance of both from the example and active love of the clergy.

Importance of Love

8. This same precept of love, great in Christ, is commended to all clergy; each one is to endeavor to perfect it, as John the Apostle admonishes, in deed and truth. By no other bond or means can families and cities stand firm and, what is more, attain Christian dignity. Considering this matter and deploring the many evils which arise both in public and private life whenever this precept is made of little account and neglected, We have often raised Our Apostolic voice in this regard, particularly in the encyclical letter *Rerum novarum*. In it We listed the principles apt to ameliorate the condition of the workers according to evangelical truth and justice. We now reiterate them and renew Our admonition. How much force and influence Catholic institutions, unions of workers, mutual aid societies, and many other groups of this nature, have when motivated by holy love, both to relieve the hardships of the poor and to properly inform a weak populace, is obvious from experience. All who contribute their counsel, their authority, their money, or their labors to these groups, on which the salvation-temporal and eternal - of many depends, certainly have earned a reward both from religion and from their compatriots.

Further Advice to the Polish People

9. In addition to the above remarks to all the Polish people, We desire to add certain things which We think will be useful to particular places in Poland. In this way We shall fix certain of the warnings We have already given more firmly in your minds. First to those great numbers of you who live under Russian rule: it is right that We praise you and strengthen you with an exhortation to retain and steadfastly nourish the spirit of constancy in professing the Catholic faith. In it you have the source and fountain, as We have said, of the greatest blessings. To value this above all other things is certainly necessary for a Christian. Commanded by divine law and illumined by the example of holy men, he never deserts this, no matter what the obstacles. He guards it with all his strength. Relying on its strength, he confidently and patiently expects consolation and aid from God, no matter what events the human condition may bring.

Past Papal Support for Poland

10. Your great confidence in Us, like that of sons, pleases Us very much. Therefore We call to your attention the deceitful trickery which has been evilly spread about concerning Our benevolence and solicitude for you. Be convinced of this: We have not done less than Our predecessors, not only for your compatriots but also for you. Indeed to support your confidence, We are prepared both to exert a tremendous effort in all things and to pursue them confidently. It is useful to recall that from the very beginning of Our pontificate, We, always thinking about the relief of the Catholic cause among your people, brought it to the attention of the Imperial Council so that We might fight for those things

which the dignity of the Apostolic See and the defense of your interests seemed to require. As a result of these efforts, We obtained certain agreements in the year 1882. Among these is the freedom to govern seminaries according to the rules of canon law; another stipulates that the ecclesiastical academy of Petersburg, which is open to Polish students, be given over entirely to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Mohilev and be expanded for the greater advantage of the clergy and the Catholic religion. We also received assurance that the laws which your clergy complained were too severe would either be repealed or softened as soon as possible. From that time on, We seized every opportunity to defend those agreements. In fact it pleased Us even to bring these demands to the attention of the emperor himself, who is friendly to Us and whose high regard for justice in your cause We can eagerly testify to. Nor shall We omit prayers for him for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord.(6) Continue to safeguard with Us the dignity and the holy rights of the Catholic religion. For only when in possession of just security and liberty is it equipped with the appropriate aids for accomplishing its work as it should. Then it is able to stand firm according to its proper purpose and to produce the blessings which it ought. Since you yourselves perceive the kind of labor We have given to obtain and preserve the tranquility of public order among nations, never cease to work so that the respect for higher authority and the obedience in public discipline of both the clergy and laity may remain firm. Then all causes of offense or criticism will be removed, every accusation will be changed into reverence, and the praise of the Catholic name will remain and increase. It is also your duty to see to it that nothing is lacking for the eternal salvation of the faithful, either in the administration of ecclesiastical law or in the preaching of the divine work or in nourishing the spirit of religion. Also see to it that children and adolescents are taught sacred catechism especially in the schools, and let that instruction be given, whenever possible, by priests. Further, let the beauty of sacred buildings and the respect for religious festivals be suitable to pious worship. From these things the faith draws a healthy increase. You will have done well indeed if you forestall danger should it appear to be imminent in these matters. For this reason do not hesitate to appeal to the agreements which were made with the Apostolic See. Certainly the absence of such difficulties and the presence of real concord should be desirable and pleasing not only to the Polish people, but to all who are guided by a sincere love of the state. For, as We said in the beginning, the Catholic Church is so constituted as never to bring forth anything at all harmful to peoples and to states, but only benefits, even in temporal matters.

11. Now for you who are subject to the house of Hapsburg. Diligently recall how much you owe to that august emperor for his great zeal for the Catholic religion. Therefore your trust in him and your grateful obedience should daily shine more brightly. A similar zeal should be manifest in your pursuit of all that pertains to the security and glory of the Catholic religion, whether already well-established or to be established as times and circumstances indicate. We very much desire that the University of Cracow, an old and noble seat of learning, retain its soundness and pre-eminence; We would even like it to rival the praises of such academies which the outstanding care of the episcopate and the generosity of private individuals have established with Our encouragement. In your academies, under the skillful direction of Our Cardinal and Bishop, serious studies should proceed in friendly agreement with faith, giving as much assistance for the defense of the faith as they borrow light and strength from it. Again it should be a great concern of yours, as it is of Ours, that religious orders flourish and enjoy a good reputation in the minds of all. They are commended by the perfection of virtue they eagerly pursue, by the diversity of their teaching, and by their fruitful labor in the care of souls. They are at hand to the Church as a ready militia, and the state has used them as good helpers for all kinds of worthy tasks. Looking back to Galicia in particular, We recall with great good will the ancient Order of St. Basil, the restoration of which has concerned Us. Its cheerful, religious obedience to Our expectations overjoyed Us. Now this order is well on its way to regaining its former glory for it is useful to the local Church in many ways. Under its guidance, the vigilance of the episcopate and the industry of the priests shine more brightly every day. Permit Us to repeat an exhortation about the Ruthenians. Though you differ from them in origin and rite, be joined to them more closely in will and loving association as becomes those who share the same region, the same state, but especially the same faith. For the Church considers them to be deserving of good will and loves them as her children to whom she, with wise discretion, permits legitimate customs and their own rites. So you too, with the clergy in the forefront, must cherish them as brothers whose hearts and souls are one, striving finally to the end that the glory of the one God and Lord increase and the fruit of justice be multiplied in "the beauty of peace."

12. With a loving mind We also turn Our prayer to you who inhabit the province of Gniezno and Poznan. Indeed, We are pleased to recall, among other things, that We have raised to the See of Adalbert, with the consent of all of you, one of your countrymen, a man of extraordinary piety, prudence and love. We are even more pleased to see with what obedience and love you strive to be subject to his gentle rule. For this reason We are able to hope that the Catholic religion will continue to grow among you. We urge you to trust the generous equity of the Emperor. We personally experienced, on more than one occasion, what a benevolent mind he has for you. He will certainly help you if you continue in respect for law and in the praise of things well done.

13. These precepts and exhortations, Venerable Brethren, We desire each of you to communicate to your flocks so that your labors may prove more fruitful. In these things Our beloved sons will perceive Our great love for them. That Our beloved children receive these exhortations with obedience and piety is what We desire most. If they keep these precepts diligently, and We are certain that they will, they will be able to avoid the dangers to their faith, to cherish the memorable deeds of their fathers, and to emulate their spirit and example. From these will flow the best rewards for their solace also in this life. We ask you earnestly to join Us in requesting divine help through the intercession of the glorious Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, whose feast the Christian people celebrate today, and all the heavenly patrons of Poland. As a sign of these things and a testimony of Our special benevolence, We lovingly impart Our Apostolic Blessing to you, to your clergy, and to the people entrusted to your care.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, March 19, 1894, the seventeenth year of Our pontificate.

LEO XIII

REFERENCES:

1. 1 Tm 3.15.

2. Mt 28.20.

3. Rom 13.5.

4. Tm 3.1-2.

5. Eph 4.12.

6. Prv 21.1.

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