

# NOMEN ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH AND

*Leo XIII*

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Our first duty is to spread the name and reign of Christ more widely every day, and to call back the mutinous and the wandering to the bosom of the Church; this has occupied Our concern for a long time. For this reason We never cease to safeguard and multiply pious projects and to support them with the help gathered from the Catholic people. By this means the powerful light of Christian wisdom is spread among the erring. We did this especially in the third year of Our pontificate with the encyclical letter *Sancta Dei Civitas* in order to win for the illustrious Society for the Propagation of the Faith both greater support and generosity from the faithful. Then We were pleased to follow with exhortations showing how it had grown in a short time, from small beginnings to so large a stature; and with what testimonies of praise and grants of indulgences Our illustrious predecessors, Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, Pius IX had honored it. Finally, Our exhortations demonstrated how much aid had been given to the sacred missions throughout the world from this source, and how much more was to be expected. Nor by God's blessing was the fruit small in response to this exhortation. In the following years we saw the expansion of this most worthy work, since the generosity of the faithful responded to the zeal and the perseverance of the bishops. But now there is a new need and one more grave, which may demand that the spirit of Catholic love become more wide-spread. Venerable Brethren, may it stimulate your skill.

2. From the apostolic letter *Praeclara* published last June, you know that We invited and urged all nations to the unity of the Christian faith. Thus, through Us the divine promise of "one sheepfold and one Pastor" would be realized. You have learned from Our recent apostolic letters concerning the safeguarding of the Eastern Rites that We look with special care to the East and its churches, renowned and venerated by many names. From these same letters you have learned the procedures by which, in consultation with the Eastern patriarchs, We have investigated how to bring about more readily the desired end, namely the union of the Roman and Eastern Catholic Churches. We do not deny that this goal involves great difficulties. To overcome them, Our strength is not sufficient; nevertheless We confidently judge that the necessary strength of trust and of constancy is found in God. For He who motivated Us to undertake this mission will in His providence certainly supply the strength and the resources to complete it. And this is what We implore from Him, and We exhort all the faithful to also pray earnestly for this. Since the divine help must necessarily be joined with human effort, it is right for Us therefore to expend special care in seeking and supporting whatever seems to contribute to the end We have in view.

3. To ensure that the Eastern Christians who have seceded will return to the onetru Church, it is necessary to provide them with an abundance of holy ministerswho, endowed with doctrine and piety, may persuade the others to accept thedesired unity. In addition, Catholic wisdom and life must be made known andimparted to them in such a fashion that it will fir their national charactercongenially. Therefore houses must be opened wherever expedient for the sacrededucation of the youth, a sufficient number of high schools should be available,distributed according to population. Their power of exercising each rite maythus be supplied with dignity. Genuine knowledge of religion, should be extendedto all by making the best literature available. You can easily understand thecosts of these and similar ventures. You also understand that the EasternChurches by themselves cannot meet all these expenses. Nor can We Ourselves inthese hard rimes offer the help We would like. Suitable aid must be askedprincipally from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith which We have justnow praised. Its purpose is entirely consonant with what We now have in mind.But lest apostolic missions, deprived in part of the aids by which they aresustained, suffer any harm, We must insist that the generosity of the Catholicstoward the Society become greater. It is fitting that a similar concern also beapplied to the Society for the Schools of the East whose growth We encouraged, especially since its directors have openly promised to contribute as much as possible for this worthy cause.

4. For this, venerable brothers, We particularly ask your assistance. We do notdoubt that you, who are so eager to

support with Us the cause of the Church, will undertake this outstanding work. Zealously see to it that the Society for the Propagation of the Faith grows as much as possible among the faithful entrusted to your care. We are certain that many more will eagerly give both their name and their resources to this Society if they see clearly its excellence, the abundance of spiritual gifts it has to offer, and the benefits which can now be rightly hoped for the Christian cause. It certainly should move Catholic men to know that they can do nothing for Us so pleasing, nor so salutary for themselves and the Church than to meet Our desires by contributing. With their contributions We can accomplish what We have resolved upon for the good of the Eastern Church. May God, who alone is glorified with the spread of the Christian name and its unity in faith and government, graciously bless Our beginnings and favor Our desires. As an auspice of His choicest blessing, Venerable Brethren, We most lovingly give Our Apostolic Blessing to all of you, your clergy and your people. Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, December 24, 1894, in the seventeenth year of Our pontificate.

**LEO XIII**

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