

INTER GRAVES ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE CHURCH IN PERU

Leo XIII

Amid the many grave cares which continually divide and oppress Us, We gladly received the obedient letter which you, Venerable Brothers, sent us after your synod in the city of Lima. Reading it with the paternal love We have for you and your people, We were greatly delighted with the repeated proofs of your love and trust in Us and this See of Blessed Peter. But We were most pleased by the common zeal with which you met in obedience to Our desires to deal with the gravest concerns of religion and to improve the moral conduct in that best flock over which the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops.(1)

2. We completely approve this determination to ensure that your faithful stand firm in sincere adherence to the Catholic faith. - Nevertheless it is Our pleasure to add new incentives, just as to runners in a race, so that you continue strenuously as you have begun and attend such synods as opportunity or necessity may dictate. For We are convinced by the long standing belief of the Church, as We have declared many times, that the most effective means of opposing widespread creeping error and of safeguarding religion is to have the sacred bishops more closely united among themselves, sharing plans and proposals.

3. We know the religious situation in Peru and desire that Catholicism flourish there. So in order that these synods may be more useful to your faithful, We will detail what matters you should direct your attention to. These are most apt to fortify the road of faith and unfetter the efficacy of the Church. For this reason We have never ceased to inculcate them in frequent general documents and in individual letters to bishops.

Importance of Education

4. First, direct your efforts to inculcating the discipline of good morals and a lively zeal for acquiring knowledge in the seminarians. This will ensure that the studies which now decline and languish among the youths growing up as the hope of the Church will attain that splendor which We justly desire and which the religious times require. For you know that the plan of divine providence was this: at first to use the valiant martyrs to break the manifest opposition and ferocity of tyrants, so that their blood would be the seed of Christianity; then according to the same plan to destine men of outstanding wisdom in every age to defend, not only by sacred authority but by the aid of human reason, the treasures of truth which Christ brought to the Church. Now, however, the contagion of perverse opinions contaminates and corrupts all things, and, under the pretext of the development of doctrine, the wisdom given by God is opposed and rejected. So it is easy to understand that there is a need for defenders who have put on the armor of knowledge and are always prepared(2) as the Apostle warns, to satisfy everyone seeking a reason for the hope which is in us, and to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict.(3) In regulating the course of studies in your seminaries, We desire that you consider what We have prescribed in encyclical letters concerning this matter. Certainly in the teaching of philosophy the Angelic Doctor Thomas Aquinas is to be greatly honored. The wisdom which always flows richly from his writings and which is considered worthy of lasting praise by Roman Pontiffs is to be imparted to the students in great and generous measure. Then the physical sciences are not to be neglected. For besides the fact that at present they are so highly esteemed, it is from them that those who hate Catholic dogmas draw their arguments to assail the truths of religion. For this reason care must be taken that enough clergy are knowledgeable in such warfare to answer the detractors and refute their errors with their own arguments. Finally observe religiously what We have recently decreed concerning the cultivation of Biblical studies. If you will do these things, the honor of the clergy will flourish and the reputation of the Church will endure. She always was considered to be the advocate and mother of sound learning and truly should be so considered. Besides you will have at hand suitable men, called to share your ministry and most useful in teaching the faithful and promoting piety.

Selection of Pastors

5. Now another thing which We strongly commend is that you appoint only the best men you can find as parish priests. For those who are elevated to this post, full of honor and authority but fuller yet of cares and rugged byways, are those whom the bishops choose as associates in their pastoral cares, and whom they use especially as helpers as an example to those who shall believe in Him for the attainment of eternal life.(4) For Christ Himself guides and protects His pastors; He keeps the faithful vigilant, lest the holy people of God be endangered by the attacks of enemies and suffer harm. They are appointed pastors of souls made to the image of their Creator,(5) purchased for God and the Lamb not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish.(6) Therefore it is fitting that they are in Labor again until Christ be formed in them.(7) As pastors, unless they prefer to be numbered among the hired servants, they must know their sheep, nourish them with the food of the Word of God, and arm them with the armor of the sacraments. Themselves models for the flock, holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience,(8) let them guide the people entrusted to them in such a way that they can say with the Apostle be imitators of me as I am of Christ.(9) With good cause they are considered angels whom God sends before his people to guard it on the way(10) and through the midst of enemies to bring it to the place I have prepared, the holy city of Jerusalem to be revealed in the Last time.(11) Since all this is so, you see, Venerable Brothers, how much labor is needed to select pastors and how much continuous vigilance to keep them faithful to their office. They must be the men of whom the words of our Lord were spoken: You are the light of the world . . . You are the salt of the earth.(12) Therefore choose men on fire with love and zealous concern for souls, who do not seek what is theirs but what is Christ's, ready to endure labor and even to lay down their lives for their sheep. Those who strive to undertake so arduous and venerable a task for the sake of filthy gain or for human reasons, who lack suitable holiness and learning, are to be rejected. They are mercenaries who do not enter by the gate, salt which has lost its saltiness; it is no Longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.(13).

Importance of Missionaries

6. These things will be useful to those who already have happily joined the flock of the Lord. But in your midst are those who have not yet been called out of darkness into His marvelous light,(14) who sit in darkness still and in the shadow of death,(15) sheep who now perish, whom you must lead to Jesus, the first pastor of souls. The city of the living God, the Church is bound by no limits and stands open for the salvation of all. Her efficacy has been given her by her divine Founder, and she reaches from sea to sea and daily enlarges the place of her tent and the skins of her tabernacle.(16) Hence by right and merit she is called Catholic. We experience and correctly know that this coming of peoples to Sion the holy mountain is to be attributed to divine grace and that it is God who gives the Christian name its increase. No one can come to me unless the Father draw him.(17) This, however is the plan of the merciful God, proved by the teaching and deeds of our Redeemer, that mortal man cooperates with the work of God for the salvation of souls. For faith, as the Apostle tells us, depends on hearing and hearing on the word of Christ: but how are they to hear if no one preaches? and how are men to preach unless they be sent?(18) Therefore We urge that sacred missions to the Indians be multiplied. May more men of mercy be found who freely and gladly may be sent as workers to the harvest of the Lord. These men do not yield to flesh and blood, but leaving their brothers behind, do everything to win souls for Christ, to bring civilized culture and gentle manners to a barbarous people, and to dispel the darkness of ignorance, so that they may receive a place among those sanctified by faith.(19)

Use the Press to Enhance Catholicism

7. The final matter We want you to diligently concern yourselves with is this: since in these times daily papers and magazines are abused to spread false opinions and so weaken morals, you should consider that it is your turn to travel the same road and use the same means, they wickedly for destruction, you piously for edification. It will be a great help if men of virtue and learning give themselves to writing and publishing their efforts either daily or at stated times. By laying bare error gradually and carefully, truth will be disseminated and languor of minds dissipated. Then the faith nurtured in their hearts will be professed openly and strenuously for the sake of justice. What brilliant rewards there will be if such writers discharge their proper duties, since they fight for the best of causes. Clearly, as We have warned on other occasions, they must be endowed with moderation, prudence, and charity; they must strenuously defend the

principles of truth and right and affirm the holy prerogatives of the Church; they must make known the majesty of the Apostolic See; and they must respect the authority of those who govern the state. In the performance of their duties, however, they must remember to love the leadership of the bishops and follow their advice. Thus, Venerable Brothers, an excellent defense may arise by which you could recall the people entrusted to you from the fountains of corruption and lead them to wells of living water.

8. Here, therefore, you have the material We want you to consider in your synods. We have no doubt that you will make every certain and deliberative effort to respond to Our desires. And that this may come about by common consent, We implore the aid of heaven, using as intercessors, together with Mary the Immaculate Mother of God, the holy Bishop Turibius and the Virgin Rose, the first of your country Peru and of the whole of South America to be addressed by the Church a flower of sanctity.

9. Meanwhile, as witness of Our love, Venerable Brothers, and as a promise of divine blessings, We most lovingly impart to all of you, to the clergy, and to your people the Apostolic Blessing.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, May 1, 1894, in the seventeenth year of Our pontificate.

LEO XIII

REFERENCES:

- 1. Acts 20.28.**
- 2. 1 Pt 3.15.**
- 3. Ti 1.9.**
- 4. 1 Tm 1.16.**
- 5. Rev 14.4.**
- 6. 1 Pt 1.18.**
- 7. Gal 4.19.**
- 8. 1 Tm 3.9.**
- 9. 1 Cor 14.16.**
- 10. Ex 23.20.**
- 11. 1 Pt. 1.5.**
- 12. Mr 5.14.**
- 13. Mr 5.13.**
- 14. 1 Pt 2.9.**
- 15. Lk 1.79.**
- 16. Is 54.2.**
- 17. Jn 6.44.**
- 18. Rom 10.16f.**
- 19. Acts 26.18.**

Copyright © Dicastery for Communication

Source: vatican.va