



Cum Nuper

Encyclical Of Pope Pius IX

On Care For Clerics

January 20, 1858

To Our Venerable Brothers, the Archbishops, Bishops and other Ordinaries of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Greetings and Apostolic Blessing.

Last Christmas We received your kind letter, in which once more professing your singular piety, love, and observance toward Us and this See of Peter, you indicate that you are constantly praying that God may aid Our humble person as We labor with the greatest solicitude for all the Churches throughout the world. These extraordinary expressions moved Us to write this encyclical letter to all of you who discharge your pastoral office in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, so that you may understand the love and concern We feel toward you and the faithful committed to your care.

2. Indeed We can scarcely express Our deep sorrow upon learning last December that a great many of your towns were so profoundly shaken by terrible earthquakes that a countless multitude of your peoples were killed by collapsing walls. King Ferdinand II, greatly grieved, has continuously offered support and financial help for the afflicted and prostrate inhabitants of these towns. As soon as the sad news of this great calamity reached Us, We implored God's mercy for these unhappy people and begged Him to heal the tribulations of the earth, whose foundations were so dreadfully shaken.

3. Holy Scripture clearly teaches that these scourges of God are provoked by the sins of men; therefore we exhort that, in fulfilling your ministry, your primary concern may be to turn the faithful committed to your care aside from sin and wrong-doing and to lead them in the paths of virtue, justice, and religion.

4. To Our mutual grief some clergy in your Kingdom, having forgotten their vocation, arouse the indignation of God by their reprehensible manner of life which, of course sets a bad example for the Christian people. For this reason you

should strive to obliterate the corruption and abuses which have made their inroads into the conduct of the Clergy; support instead a sound way of life for them in keeping with the discipline of the holy canons. Properly train the younger clergy from their earliest years in piety, holiness, and religious spirit; see that they have a strong foundation in liberal arts, solid learning, and knowledge of the sacred canons.

5. First and foremost, keeping always in mind the precepts of the Apostle, be most careful not to lay hands prematurely on anyone and be extremely cautious in conferring sacred orders. Never, from a misplaced sense of obligation, partisanship, or favor, join to the clergy and promote to ecclesiastical grades and orders those who, not having even minimally the gifts required by the sacred canons, should be totally rejected from sacred ministry. He who does not fear to initiate into sacred orders those who are unworthy inflicts great harm on the Church. Therefore, your first concern is to strictly follow the prescriptions of the sacred canons. Carefully examine and scrutinize each candidate's origin, training, talents, character, and teaching. Ordain only those outstanding individuals who can truly benefit your dioceses. If they earnestly reject all things which are forbidden to clerics and which never become them, they may be an example to the faithful in "word, speech, charity, faith, and chastity."

6. Moreover, examine most intently the conduct, honesty, piety, knowledge, and prudence of those to whom the care and direction of souls is to be committed. Be ever vigilant that pastors fulfill their office zealously, wisely and holily. They should never fail to feed the Christian people entrusted to them by means of preaching the divine word, of administering the sacraments, and of dispensing of the multiple grace of God. They should diligently imbue young people especially and the uneducated with the mysteries and teachings of our divine religion and form them in all piety and virtue. If pastors do not fulfill their duty, religion and public life are damaged, morals are perverted, Christian discipline weakens, the exercise of religious worship declines, and all sorts of vices overwhelm people.

7. Moreover, you must be especially watchful that young people of both sexes be educated in fear of the Lord and His law and that they be trained in moral integrity. Accordingly, diligently inspect both private and public schools; see that your young people are free from all danger and that they receive a sound and completely Catholic education. Stretch, therefore, every fiber of your pastoral zeal to obtain this goal, since you know that the prosperity of the spiritual and civil communities depends greatly on the proper education of the youth. You know also the manifold evils by which, in these iniquitous times, the enemies of God and man attempt to pervert and corrupt the innocence of youth.

8. With similar diligence instruct the faithful in the doctrines of Catholic religion by word and by writing. Defend the people from the contagion of so many diabolic errors. Warn them to stand firm and unmoveable in the profession of our most holy faith and to observe most diligently the laws of God and His holy Church, never

allowing themselves to be deceived and led into error by the followers of perverse doctrine. However, unwholesome books emerge everywhere; in them the most skillful fabricators of lies attempt to mislead everyone by corrupt and evil opinions of all sorts and to confuse things human and divine in order to cause the foundations of Christian and civil society to collapse. Strive to avert and repel this deadly pestilence of books from your flock. And, that you may the more easily and readily protect sound doctrine and good morals and close even avenues of approach to error and corruption, do not fail to inspect accurately all books, especially those which treat of philosophy, theology, and sacred matters and also those which deal with canon and civil law.

9. You know that it is also part of your episcopal duty to protect and vindicate at all times the venerable rights of the Church. You must preserve its goods and be concerned for their careful administration. Take the utmost care that pious legacies, especially those with regard to Masses, and other obligations be scrupulously observed and religiously carried out with all fraud and base gain far removed. With skill and prudence, you must provide that all business in your individual episcopal Curias be handled with all fairness, equity, and honesty. Therefore, venerable brothers, take great care that in your episcopal Curias, those men alone be engaged who, approved because of their integrity of life and skill in managing things, can carry out wisely and honestly the tasks delegated by you. And We most strongly ask that you try to judge ecclesiastical cases which belong to your tribunals according to the prescripts of the sacred canons and the force of convention with great care and inquiry. Likewise strive to see that your sentences are properly carried out, and, if there is need, seek the help and assistance of the civil power to this end.

10. Moreover, since Religious men are supplied to bishops to be helpers in the cultivation of the Lord's vineyard, as Benedict XIV, advises,[1] continually exhort them, emulating their founders, to return in a thoroughly religious fashion that which they vowed and to lead their lives according to the prescribed laws and to perform useful work in word, example, and prayer for you and your dioceses.

11. Also, with special concern and charity look after virgins sacred to God. They are the choice part of your flocks, the flower of the ecclesiastical plant, the ornament of spiritual grace. Afford them assistance, so that mindful of their holy vocation by which they have dedicated themselves to God, they may avert their eyes from human things and raise them always to heavenly ones. Then daily advancing from virtue to virtue, they may strive to diffuse the spirit of Christ everywhere. And We especially request that you attempt to carry out exactly what Benedict XIV wisely advised in His Constitution concerning the designation of extraordinary confessors for nuns.[2]

12. Finally, venerable brothers, We greatly desire that you be careful to hold Provincial Councils according to the precepts of the holy canons. For surely, you know that in this way, having consulted among yourselves and weighed everything

properly, you may more wisely provide opportune remedies for ills and promote the prosperity of your dioceses; thereafter you will hold diocesan synods, which are mandatory under canonical sanction. In your Kingdom some archbishops lack suffragans, and some bishops do not have their metropolitan present; therefore they cannot hold a provincial council. It will be up to the prudence of these same holy bishops, having duly weighed all circumstances of place, time and situation, to convene with bishops with whom they think it more expedient in the Lord to hold councils of this sort without however any detriment to the rights and privileges enjoyed by any absent bishops and without the slightest change regarding the status of their Churches.

13. We have indicated to you those things which We thought should be indicated to you above all else. We know that you will wish to satisfy Our wishes and admonitions because Ferdinand II, illustrious King of the Two Sicilies, stretches out to you now his helping hand. We are confident that under his leadership, the Church in his kingdom will enjoy all liberty and exercise all its rights, as God and the sanctions of the sacred canons ordain.

14. Meanwhile, We humbly but earnestly pray and beseech Our merciful God to continue to pour more propitiously His richest gifts of goodness upon you. May He bless your pastoral cares, counsels, and labors, so that the faithful entrusted to you may daily and with greater fortitude turn aside from evil and do good. Growing in the knowledge of God and the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ may they walk worthily before God, pleasing Him in all things, and may they be fruitful in all good works. As a guarantee thereof and a clear sign of Our special benevolence to you, receive the apostolic blessing, venerable brothers, which from the bottom of Our heart We lovingly impart to you yourselves and all the clergy of your churches, and to the faithful laity.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's, 20 January 1858, in the 12th year of Our Pontificate.

Endnotes

1. Apostolic constitution *Impositi Nobis*, 27 February 1746.
2. Apostolic constitution *Pastoralis curae*, 5 August 1748.