



Singulari Quidem

On The Church In Austria

Encyclical Of Pope Pius IX

March 17, 1856

To Our Beloved Sons the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church and to Our Venerable Brothers the Archbishops and Bishops of the Austrian Empire.

Beloved Sons and Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Blessing.

It is with a special joy that We learn of your willing response to Our wishes and those of Our dear son in Jesus Christ, Franz Josef, emperor of Austria and apostolic king. These wishes were communicated to each of you at almost the same time. In your eminent devotion and pastoral concern, you met in the imperial city of Vienna to discuss the most suitable means of executing the provisions of the concordat which We agreed upon with the Emperor. This illustrious and prince to conclude the concordat with Us to protect the Church in its rights -- to Our great consolation, to the immortal glory of his name, and to the joy of all good people. That is why We cannot now refrain from showing you Our intimate and affectionate feelings. At the same time, We thank you for showing such remarkable love for the Church by gathering in these conferences. You will thus better understand the goodwill We feel for you and for all the faithful of this empire who are entrusted to your care. First of all, let us consider the execution of that concordat which contains, as you know, many articles whose implementation depends especially on you. We ardently desire that you all agree and follow the same method of putting them into practice, while keeping in mind the diverse demands of the various provinces in that vast empire of Austria. If any doubt or difficulty arises concerning the meaning of some article-which We do not believe will happen -- you should submit these difficulties to Us. After having come to an understanding with his Imperial Majesty (as stipulated in article 35 of the concordat), We shall offer an appropriate solution.

2. We embrace the Lord's entire flock, which was entrusted to Us by Jesus Christ, with ardent love. Furthermore Our apostolic ministry imposes on Us the duty of using all Our powers to obtain the eternal salvation of all peoples and all nations. Our love and Our ministry urge Us to arouse more and more your eminent pity, strength, and pastoral concern. We do this so that you might continue to fulfill all

the duties of your episcopal office with an ever greater ardor and so that you spare no care, no and no effort to keep the deposit of our holy faith pure and intact in your dioceses. You should assure the safety of your flock and defend it against all the snares and deceptions of the enemies. You are familiar with the perverse schemes and monstrous errors of opinion which the astute partisans of impious doctrines use to lead people -- especially the imprudent and the uneducated--from the path of truth and justice into error and perdition.

3. Among the many deplorable evils which disturb and afflict both ecclesiastical and civil society, two stand out in our day and are justly considered to be the cause of the others. In effect, you are aware of the innumerable and fatal damages which the hideous error of indifferentism causes to Christian and civil society. It causes us to forget our duties to God in whom we live and act and have our being. It causes us to slacken our concern for holy religion and shakes almost to destruction the very basis of all law, justice, and virtue. There is little difference between this hideous form of indifference and the devilish system of indifference between the different religions. This belief embraces people who have strayed from the truth, who are enemies of the true faith and forget their own salvation, and who teach contradictory beliefs without firm doctrine. They make no distinction between the different creeds, agree with everybody, and maintain that the haven of eternal salvation is open to sectarians of any religion. The diversity of their teachings does not concern them as long as they agree to combat that which alone is the truth.[1]

4. You see, dearly beloved sons and venerable brothers, how much vigilance is needed to keep the disease of this terrible evil from infecting and killing your flocks. Do not cease to diligently defend your people against these pernicious errors. Saturate them with the doctrine of Catholic truth more accurately each day. Teach them that just as there is only one God, one Christ, one Holy Spirit, so there is also only one truth which is divinely revealed. There is only one divine faith which is the beginning of salvation for mankind and the basis of all justification, the faith by which the just person lives and without which it is impossible to please God and to come to the community of His children.[2] There is only one true, holy, Catholic church, which is the Apostolic Roman Church. There is only one See founded in Peter by the word of the Lord,[3] outside of which we cannot find either true faith or eternal salvation. He who does not have the Church for a mother cannot have God for a father, and whoever abandons the See of Peter on which the Church is established trusts falsely that he is in the Church.[4] Thus, there can be no greater crime, no more hideous stain than to stand up against Christ, than to divide the Church engendered and purchased by His blood, than to forget evangelical love and to combat with the furor of hostile discord the harmony of the people of God.[5]

5. Divine worship consists in these two things: pious doctrines and good works, in such a way that doctrines without good works cannot please God, nor does God accept works divorced from religious doctrines. The narrow and difficult path which leads to life can be found not in the practice of the virtues alone or in the

observance of precepts, but on the way of faith.[6] Constantly arouse your faithful people so that they will persevere ever more firmly and constantly in the profession of the Catholic religion. Let them likewise endeavor to assure their calling and their election by means of good works. While you work at the salvation of your flock, strive also, in all goodness, patience, and teaching, to recall the unfortunate strays to the one fold of Christ and to Catholic unity. Address to them especially these words of St. Augustine: "Come, brothers, if you wish, so that you may be grafted to the vine. We are saddened to see you thus cut off and lying so. Count the bishops who have occupied the See of Peter; see this uninterrupted succession of popes. See the rock against which the powers of hell will not be able to prevail."[7] "Whoever eats the lamb outside of this house is an impious person. Whoever is not in Noah's ark will perish in the flood."[8]

6. Another disease just as dangerous is spreading, a disease to which the name of rationalism has been given, because of the pride and a certain vanity of reason associated with it. Certainly the Church does not condemn[9] the efforts of those who want to know the truth, since it is God who made it the nature of man to be most eager to grasp truth. Nor does she condemn the efforts of healthy and right reason, for it is through this reason that we cultivate the spirit, study nature, and bring to light its most hidden secrets. This tender mother recognizes and justly maintains that reason is the most notable of the heavenly gifts,[10] since it is through reason that we raise ourselves above the senses and display a certain image of God in ourselves. She knows that we must search until we find and that we must believe what we have believed. But we must also believe, in addition, that there is nothing else to believe and to seek once we have found and believed what was taught by Christ, who does not command us to seek anything other than what He taught.[11] What is it that the Church does not tolerate? What is it that she censures and absolutely condemns in virtue of her mission to preserve what has been entrusted to her? The Church has always condemned and continues to condemn the conduct of those who abuse their reason; those who do not fear to foolishly and criminally prefer reason to the authority of what God Himself says; those who boldly exalt themselves; those who, blinded by their pride and their vanity, lose the light of truth and proudly spurn the faith of which it is written: "Whoever does not believe will be condemned." [12] Full of confidence in themselves,[13] they deny that we must believe in God for Himself and accept what He taught us about Himself. The Church does not cease to oppose these people,[14] since whenever something deals with the very knowledge of God, it is God whom we should believe. It is from Him that all we believe about Him comes, because man could not know God if He Himself did not communicate this salutary knowledge.

7. These are the people whom the Church seeks to bring back to sound reasoning with these words: "What is there more contrary to reason than to seek to exalt oneself above reason by means of reason itself? And what is more contrary to faith than to not want to believe that which we cannot attain by reason?"[15] She never ceases to repeat to them that faith bases itself not on reason but on authority[16]

because it is not suitable that God, in speaking to mankind, should use arguments, as if we could refuse to believe. Rather, He spoke as was appropriate, as the supreme judge of everything, who does not have to argue but who rather issues His pronouncements.[17] The Church clearly declares that the only hope of salvation for mankind is placed in the Christian faith, which teaches the truth, scatters the darkness of ignorance by the splendor of its light, and works through love. This hope of salvation is placed in the Catholic Church which, in preserving the true worship, is the solid home of this faith and the temple of God. Outside of the Church, nobody can hope for life or salvation unless he is excused through ignorance beyond his control. The Church teaches and proclaims that if sometimes we can use human wisdom to study the divine word, our wisdom should not for that reason proudly usurp to itself the right of master. Rather, it should act as an obedient and submissive servant, afraid of erring if it goes first and afraid of losing the light of interior virtue and the straight path of truth by following the consequences of exterior words.[18]

8. We should not conclude that religion does not progress in the Church of Christ. There is great progress! But it is truly the progress of faith, which is not change. The intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge of everybody should grow and progress, like that of the whole Church of the ages. In this way we might understand more clearly what we used to believe obscurely; in this way posterity might have joy of understanding what used to be revered without understanding. In this way the precious stones of divine dogma might be worked, adapted exactly and wisely decorated, so that they increase in grace, splendor, and beauty -- but always in the same fashion and doctrine, in the same meaning and judgment, so that we can speak of a new manner rather than new substance.[19]

9. We do not think that any one of you will be surprised if We speak again about these sorrowful matters so destructive to religious and civil society. In this way we fulfill the office of Our primacy and sovereignty in the faith.[20] Nor will you be surprised if We presume to arouse your episcopal vigilance. Since the enemy does not cease to sow weeds among the wheat, We have been placed in charge of the cultivation of the Lord's field. We have been placed by divine Providence at the head of God's family as faithful and prudent servants,[21] so We should not neglect for an instant to fulfill these duties which are inseparable from Our apostolic ministry.

10. Now We entreat you by your singular piety and prudence to take with wisdom and foresight the means which you believe at this meeting to be especially suitable for obtaining the greater glory of God and the eternal salvation of mankind in this vast empire. We sincerely rejoice to see the numerous faithful, both clergy and laity, animated by the spirit of faith and Christian love and spreading the good name of Jesus Christ. We are nonetheless deeply afflicted to know that in certain places some members of the clergy forget their dignity and their duty, choosing not to walk in the way of the vocation to which they were called. The Christian people, too little instructed in the holy precepts of our divine religion and exposed

to serious dangers, unfortunately abstain from works of piety and from frequenting the sacraments. They stray from good moral practices and from the discipline of a Christian life and hurry to their ruin. Knowing your pastoral concern, We are persuaded that you will use all your cares and all your thoughts to bring about the complete cessation of the evil which We have just described. You know that the canonical decrees wisely prescribed provincial councils and Our holy bishops always celebrated them to the great advantage of the Church. These councils contribute very much to the renewal of ecclesiastical discipline, to correcting the habits of the people, and to the removal of whatever might be harmful to them. We ardently desire that you celebrate provincial councils in conformity with the holy canons, so that suitable and salutary remedies might be applied to the evils which commonly afflict the ecclesiastical provinces of the empire.

11. Many serious matters need to be treated in these provincial councils. We desire that, at your meeting in Vienna, you take united measures by which you are able to agree on the principal points which need to be treated and established in the provincial synods. Furthermore you should with one and the same zeal take action so that in all the provinces of this empire, Our divine religion and its salutary doctrine might thrive, flourish, and rule. Then the faithful will walk as sons of light in all goodness, justice, and truth, leaving the bad and doing the good. There is nothing more effective in laying others to virtue, piety, and divine worship than the life and example of those who have consecrated themselves to the holy ministry. Do not neglect to establish as soon as possible whatever can restore ecclesiastical discipline where it has fallen and foster its accurate establishment wherever necessary.

12. Beloved sons and venerable brothers, see to this matter with a common accord. Unite your efforts and your cares so that the clergy never forget their dignity and their duty, avoiding everything which is forbidden to them. Shining with every virtue, they should be an example for the faithful in their words, in love, in faith, and in chastity. They should pray the breviary each day with suitable attention and devotion and should exercise themselves in holy prayer. They should apply themselves to the meditation of heavenly matters and should love the beauty of God's house. Let them exercise the sacred duties and ceremonies according to the Pontifical and the Roman Ritual, and let them fulfill the offices of their ministry with diligence, wisdom, and holiness. They should work continually to obtain the eternal salvation of mankind, never ceasing in their zealous discharge of sacred discipline.

13. Watch with equal care that the canons and the other beneficiaries of the metropolitan, cathedral, and collegiate churches who are bound to their duty excel in seriousness of conduct, integrity of life, and zeal for piety. They should shine like brilliant lights placed on the lampstand in the Lord's temple, carefully fulfilling all the duties of their charge and observing the law of residence. They should concern themselves with the distinction of divine worship. Full of ardor in the Lord's vigils, let them celebrate the divine lauds with attention, exactness, piety, and religion,

and not with a distracted mind, wandering eyes, and unsuitable conduct. They should always remember that they gather in choir not only to render to God the honor and worship which are due Him, but also to implore Him for every good thing for themselves and for others.

14. Each of you knows very well how spiritual exercises contribute to preserving and fostering an ecclesiastical spirit and to retaining a salutary constancy. For that reason the popes of the past have enriched them with countless indulgences, and you should constantly recommend them to the priests placed under your authority. They should retire frequently for a certain number of days to a suitable place where, far from human cares, they can purify themselves from the stains accumulated with the dust of the world. They should also occupy themselves with reviving the grace which the imposition of hands conferred on them, and with putting off the old man and his works and putting on the new man created in justice and holiness. They should do this through the careful consideration before God of their thoughts, words, and deeds. They should also meditate with care on eternity and remember the immense gifts they have received from God.

15. The lips of the priests must protect the wisdom which allows them to respond to those who consult them on the law and to convince those who combat it. It is thus necessary that you apply yourselves with the greatest care to the correct and precise instruction of the clergy. Especially in your seminaries, see that an excellent and entirely Catholic course of studies flourishes, a course by which the young clerics, under the direction of approved teachers, might be formed right from their most tender years to piety, virtue, and a Christian spirit. They should be instructed in the knowledge of Latin, in the humanities, and in philosophy, free from every danger of error. Then apply yourselves to teaching them carefully, for a sufficiently long period, dogmatic and moral theology based on the Holy Scriptures, on the tradition of the holy Fathers, and on the infallible authority of the Church. Give them a solid knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, of the sacred canons, of church history, and of the liturgy. Exercise the greatest precaution in choosing books, lest in the deluge of errors which prevails everywhere the young seminarians might be imprudently led off the path of sound doctrine. You know that there are learned men who dissent from this Holy See in religious matters and who are cut off from the Church. They are publishing the Holy Scriptures and the works of the holy Fathers, undoubtedly with a pleasing elegance but often - We cannot deplore this enough -- in an altered condition, turned away from their true meaning by perverted commentaries.

16. Each of you knows how much the Church needs capable ministers, especially in these times. It needs ministers who valiantly watch over the cause of God and His holy Church. It needs ministers who stand out in holiness of living and reputation for salutary teaching, who are powerful in word and deed and who build a faithful house for the Lord. Do not neglect anything in educating the young clerics in holiness and wisdom even from their tender years, for they will not be able to become useful ministers of the Church unless they are properly taught. Also, to

more easily effect that clerical education on which the good of the Church and the salvation of its people greatly depends, seek money from the leading churchmen of your dioceses and the wealthy laymen who are especially zealous for Catholic interests. At your example, they might offer the money for you to establish new seminaries and endow them suitably, so that the young seminarians might receive a good education right from their early years.

17. Be equally zealous that, regardless of sex or status, the youth of your dioceses might be educated in an ever more Catholic manner. Let this youth be full of the spirit of the fear of God and nourished with the milk of piety. Let Catholic youth be carefully instructed in the elements of the faith and brought to a fuller understanding of our holy religion. They should be formed in virtue, moral uprightness, and a Christian way of life. Let them be kept from all the flatteries and dangers of perversion and corruption. Constantly arouse the faithful people entrusted to you to greater religion and piety. Do everything possible so that, ever more nourished by the salutary food of truth and Catholic doctrine, these faithful people might love God with all their heart and zealously observe His commandment. Let them enter His temple frequently and religiously and keep holy the Sabbath, for they should piously attend the celebration of the divine sacrifice and the holy sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. May they honor the holy Mother of God, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, with a special devotion. They should maintain a mutual love among themselves and, persevering in prayer, they should approach God worthily, pleasing Him in everything and bearing fruit in every good deed. Furthermore, the holy missions given by suitable workers arouse the spirit of faith and religion among the people and recall them to the path of virtue and salvation. Thus We ardently desire that you support them as much as possible in your dioceses. We also bestow great and well-deserved praise on those among you who have already introduced such a salutary work in your dioceses. We are happy to see that, with the help of God's grace, they have produced abundant fruit.

18. Keep these points in mind so that your common action might bring suitable remedies to your common ills. Furthermore, nothing is more effective in repairing serious damage and in obtaining prosperity than the frequent visitation of your dioceses and the convocation of diocesan synods. You know that these are two things which the Council of Trent especially recommended. In your concern and your love for the flock entrusted to you, do not neglect the zealous visitation of your dioceses, in conformity with the canonical prescriptions. Do everything necessary to make this visitation produce happy fruits. Above all, eradicate entirely the errors, abuses, and vices which have penetrated into your diocese. Use vigilance, paternal punishments, useful discussions, and whatever means you find suitable to remove them. Spread salutary teaching and preserve intact the clerical discipline. Help and strengthen the faithful with all sorts of assistance, especially with spiritual aids; win everyone to Jesus Christ. Convene the diocesan synods, according to the prescriptions of the holy canons, with equal zeal. Take the measures which you think are the most beneficial to your dioceses. We ardently desire that you hasten to establish conferences in all the regions of your dioceses

with suitable regulations. In this way the priests who must apply themselves to reading and study, to teaching the people everything they must know for eternal salvation, and to administering the sacraments,[22] will not see their taste for the sacred disciplines diminish or their zeal languish. These conferences should bear especially on questions of moral theology and liturgy. Each and every priest should be bound to attend and to bring a written treatise on the topic you propose. You should set aside a time in these conferences to discuss moral theology or liturgical discipline after one of these priests has presented his speech on the duties of the priesthood.

19. The priests are your assistants in the government of your flock, and they are called to share your cares and to be your collaborators in the exercise of very important matters. Do not forget to enkindle their zeal so that they will fulfill their own duties with suitable diligence and piety. Encourage them to preach the divine word to the people entrusted to their care. They should administer the sacraments and bestow on the people the grace of God in all its aspects. Let them lovingly and patiently instruct the ignorant -- especially the children -- in the mysteries of the Christian faith and in the teachings of our religion. Exhort them to bring back to the path of salvation those who have strayed, for they should use all their strength to destroy hatreds, rivalries, enmities, discords, and scandals. They should strengthen the weak and visit the infirm, helping them with all kinds of aids, especially spiritual ones. Encourage them to console the afflicted, and the unfortunate. They should exhort everyone in sound doctrine and warn all people to render conscientiously to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. They should teach everybody to be subject to the princes and to the authorities in everything that is not contrary to the laws of God and of the Church, not only because of the threat of punishment but also for the sake of conscience itself. Continue, as you are doing to your great praise, to send reports concerning the situation of your dioceses to Our Congregation for the Council. Carefully inform Us of everything which concerns them, so that We might always take the necessary measures for your greater good and the greater good of your diocese. We have learned that in a few dioceses of Germany some customs have arisen concerning the union of parishes -- customs which some of you wish to preserve. We are disposed to look with favor on this; but first of all We wish to carefully examine each one of these customs, in order to allow them only within the limits of necessity and of particular circumstances. It is a duty of Our apostolic ministry to watch with the greatest care that in general, the canonical prescriptions are strictly observed.

20. Before terminating this letter, We address Ourselves particularly to those Austrian archbishops and bishops who are united to us in the true faith and in Catholic unity, adhere to the See of Peter, and follow the rites and praiseworthy customs of the Eastern Church, customs approved or permitted by the Holy See. You know how this Apostolic See has always esteemed your rites. It has tried to bring about their observance in many ways, as shown by the decrees and constitutions of the popes who have preceded Us. Among these, let it suffice to recall the letter of Benedict XIV which begins *Allatae* and is dated July 26, 1755,

and Our own letter of January 6, 1848, which begins with the words, In Suprema Petri Aposotoli Sede. We exhort you then to fulfill your ministry in conformity with your devotion and pastoral concern. Keep in mind everything about which We have spoken. Use your cares, efforts, and vigilance so that your clergy might be adorned with every virtue and educated in the best teachings, especially in the ecclesiastical disciplines. May they apply themselves diligently to obtaining the eternal salvation of the faithful in such a way that these people persevere in the way which leads to life, so that the holy unity of the Catholic religion may increase and spread. May the sacraments be administered and the divine office celebrated according to your own teachings, using the books approved by this Holy See. As We ardently desire to meet your needs and those of your people promptly, do not hesitate to turn to Us and report on the situation in your dioceses by sending a report every four years on this matter to Our Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

21. Finally, We solemnly entreat you to preserve, strengthen, and increase peace and harmony among the clergy of each diocese, both of the Latin rite and of the Greek Catholic rite. Thus, all who fight in the army of the Lord should overtake each other in mutual affection and fraternal charity, serving in unanimity and zeal the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

22. Dearly beloved sons and venerable brothers, these are the things which We especially wanted to communicate to you, in Our ardent love for you and for the faithful people of this vast Empire. In considering your excellent virtue, your religious piety, and your proven fidelity to Us and to the See of Peter, We are confident that you will willingly support these wishes and paternal counsels. We do not doubt that you will con template unceasingly your model, Jesus Christ the Chief Shepherd. We expect you to follow in the footsteps of Him who showed Himself meek and humble of heart and who gave His life for His sheep in order to leave us His example to follow. Put all your efforts into following His examples and practicing His teachings. Watch over your flock and fulfill your ministry; seek not that which comes from you but that which comes from Jesus Christ. Consider yourselves not as exercising a power of domination over the clergy but as shepherds -- rather as loving fathers who desire to become models for the flock. May nothing ever seem to you to be too burdensome, too difficult, too trying. Always be ready to suffer everything in all patience, gentleness, meekness, and prudence to try everything for the salvation of your sheep. As for Us, in the humility of Our heart, We do not cease to raise continuous and fervent prayers to the all-loving father of lights and mercies, the God of all consolation. We pray that He will see fit to bestow on you the most abundant gifts of his goodness and to bestow them with the same abundance on the dear sheep entrusted to you. As a pledge of this divine help and as a sign of Our affection for you, We lovingly impart the apostolic blessing to you, dearly beloved and venerable brothers, and to all the faithful of your dioceses, both clergy and laity.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 17th day of March in the year 1856, in the

tenth year of Our pontificate.

1. Tertullian, de praescript., chap. 41.
2. Rom 1; Heb 11; Council of Trent, session 6, chap. 8.
3. St. Cyprian, epistle 43.
4. Ibid., de unitat. Eccl.
5. Ibid., epistle 72.
6. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Cath. 4. Illumind., no. 2, St. Leo sermon 5, de Nativit. Dom.
7. In psal. contr. part. Donat.
8. St. Jerome, epistle 14(57) to Damasus.
9. Lactantius, divin. institut., bk. 3, chap. 1.
10. Clemens Alex, Stromat, bk. 1, chap. 3 and bk. 2, chap. 2; Gregory, thaumaturg, panegyric speech, 7. 13.
11. Tertullian, de praescript., chap. 9.
12. Mk 16.16.
13. St. Hilar., de Trin., bk. 4.
14. Cassian, de Incarnat., bk. 4, chap. 2.
15. St. Bernard, epistle 190.
16. Ibid, de Considerat, bk. 5, chap. 3.
17. Lactantius, divin. institut., bk. 3, chap. 1.
18. St. Peter Damian, opuscul. 36, chap. 5.
19. Vinc. Lirin. Commonitor.
20. St. Ambrose, de Incarnat., chap. 4, no. 32; Cassian, de Incarnat., bk. 3, chap. 12.
21. Ibid., de fide ad Gratian, bk. 5, prologue.
22. Council of Trent, session 23, chap. 14 on reform.