



Caritatis Studium

Encyclical Of Pope Leo XIII On The Church In Scotland

July 25, 1898

To Our Venerable Brethren, the Archbishops, and Bishops of Scotland.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Blessing.

1. The ardent charity which renders Us solicitous of Our separated brethren, in no wise permits Us to cease Our efforts to bring back to the embrace of the Good Shepherd those whom manifold error causes to stand aloof from the one Fold of Christ. Day after day We deplore more deeply the unhappy lot of those who are deprived of the fullness of the Christian Faith. Wherefore moved by the sense of the responsibility which Our most sacred office entails, and by the spirit and grace of the most loving Saviour of men, Whom We unworthily represent, We are constantly imploring them to agree at last to restore together with Us the communion of the one and the same faith. A momentous work, and of all human works the most difficult to be accomplished; one which God's almighty power alone can effect. But for this very reason We do not lose heart, nor are We deterred from Our purpose by the magnitude of the difficulties which cannot be overcome by human power alone. "We preach Christ crucified . . . and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. i. 23-25). In the midst of so many errors and of so many evils with which We are afflicted or threatened, We continue to point out whence salvation should be sought, exhorting and admonishing all nations to lift up "their eyes to the mountains whence help shall come" (Ps. cxx.). For indeed that which Isaias spoke in prophecy has been fulfilled, and the Church of God stands forth so conspicuously by its Divine origin and authority that it can be distinguished by all beholders: "And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains and shall be exalted above the hills" (Is. ii. 2).

2. Scotland, so dear to the Holy See, and in a special manner to Us, has its place in Our care and solicitude. We love to recall the fact that over twenty years ago the

first act of Our Apostolic Ministry was performed in favour of Scotland, for on the second day of our Pontificate We gave back to the Scottish people their Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. From that day forward, with your efficient cooperation, Venerable Brethren, and that of your clergy, We have constantly sought to promote the welfare of your nation, which is naturally inclined to embrace the truth. And now that We are so far advanced in years that the end cannot be delayed much longer, We have thought it meet to address you, Venerable Brethren, and thus give your nation a further proof of Our Apostolic affection.

3. The terrible storm which swept over the Church in the sixteenth century, deprived the vast majority of the Scottish people, as well as many other peoples of Europe, of that Catholic Faith which they had gloriously held for over one thousand years. It is most pleasing to Us to revert to the great achievements of your forefathers on behalf of Catholicism, and also to allude to some of those, and they are many, to whose virtue and illustrious deeds Scotland owes so much of her renown. Surely your fellow-countrymen will not take it ill that We should again remind them of what they owe to the Catholic Church and to the Apostolic See. We speak of what you already know. As your ancient Annals relate, St. Ninian, a countryman of yours, was so inflamed with the desire of greater spiritual progress by the reading of Holy Writ, that he exclaimed: "I shall rise and go over sea and land, seeking that truth which my soul loveth. But is so much trouble needful? Was it not said to Peter: 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?' Therefore in the faith of Peter there is nothing wanting, nothing obscure, nothing imperfect, nothing against which evil doctrines and pernicious views can prevail, after the manner of the gates of hell. And where is the faith of Peter, but in the See of Peter? Thither, thither I must repair, that going forth from my country, from my kindred, and from my father's house, I may see in the land of the Vision the will of the Lord and be protected by His Temple." (Ex Hist. Vitae S. Niniani a S. Aelredo Ab. cons.) Hence, full of reverence he hastened to Rome, and when at the Tomb of the Apostles he had imbibed in abundance Catholic truth at its very source and fountainhead, by command of the Supreme Pontiff he returned home, preached the true Roman faith to his fellow-countrymen, and founded the Church of Galloway about two hundred years before St. Augustine landed in England. This was the faith of St. Columba; this was the faith kept so religiously and preached so zealously by the monks of old, whose chief centre, Iona, was rendered famous by their eminent virtues. Need We mention Queen Margaret, a light and ornament not only of Scotland, but of the whole of Christendom, who, though she occupied the most exalted position in point of worldly dignity, sought only in her whole life things eternal and divine, and thus spread throughout the Church the luster of her virtues? There can be no doubt she owed this her eminent sanctity to the influence and guidance of the Catholic Faith. And did not the power and constancy of the Catholic faith give to Wallace and Bruce, the two great heroes of your race, their indomitable courage in defence of their country? We say nothing of the immense number of those who achieved so much for the commonwealth, and who belong to that progeny which the Catholic Church has never ceased to bring forth. We say

nothing of the advantages which your nation has derived from her influence. It is undeniable that it was through her wisdom and authority that those famous seats of learning were opened at St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, and that your judicial system was drawn up and adopted. Hence We can well understand why Scotland has been honoured by the title of "Special Daughter of the Holy See."

4. But since then a great change has come to pass, the ancient faith having been extinguished in the minds of the vast majority of your countrymen. Are we to suppose that it will never be restored? There are indeed some signs which lead Us to hope that, by the grace of God, a brighter religious future awaits the Scotch people. We see that Catholics are more liberally and kindly dealt with as time goes on, that Catholic doctrines are no longer publicly held up to scorn, as perhaps was formerly the case, but on the contrary are favourably considered by many, and accepted by not a few. We also perceive that false views and opinions, which effectively prevent the perception of truth, are gradually disappearing. May the search after truth spread more, for there is no doubt that an accurate knowledge of the Catholic Religion, drawn from its own, and not from extraneous, sources, will clear away many prejudices.

5. Great praise is due to the Scottish nation, as a whole, that they have always shown reverence and love for the Inspired Writings. They cannot therefore be unwilling to listen to a few words which in Our affection We would address to them on this subject with a view to their eternal welfare; since We find that in revering the Sacred Scriptures, they are in agreement with the Catholic Church. Why then should this not be the starting-point for a return to unity? We beg them to remember that they have the Books of the Old Covenant and of the New from the Catholic Church and from the Catholic Church alone. If these Inspired Writings have passed unscathed through the many and dangerous vicissitudes of centuries, such a blessing is to be attributed to her never-failing vigilance and unceasing care. History attests that in the early ages of the Church the integrity of the Scriptures was preserved by the ever-memorable efforts of the Third Synod at Carthage and of Innocent I, the Roman Pontiff. At a later time no less watchfulness was shown, as we know, by Eugenius IV. and by the Council of Trent. We Ourselves, not unmindful of the necessities of the present day, published a short while ago an Encyclical Letter in which We gravely addressed the Bishops of the Catholic world and diligently admonished them as to the means to be adopted in order to safeguard the integrity and the Divine authority of the Sacred Writings. For owing to the restlessness of modern thought, there are many whom the inordinate desire of superciliously inquiring into everything, and contempt for antiquity, pervert to such a degree, that they either refuse all authority to Holy Writ, or at least seriously curtail and minimize it. These men, puffed up by an exaggerated estimate of their own knowledge, and having an overweening trust in their own judgment, fail to perceive how rash and monstrous it is to try to measure the works of God by our own puny intelligence; nor do they sufficiently heed St. Augustine's warning: "Honour God's Scripture, honour God's Word though not understood, reverently wait in order to understand" (in Ps. 146, n. 12). "Those who study the Venerable

Scriptures ought to be admonished . . . that they must pray in order to comprehend." (Doct. Chr. lib. iii., c. 37, n. 56.) "Lest anything unknown be rashly asserted as known . . . let nothing be rashly asserted, but all things cautiously and modestly examined" (in Gen. Op. Imp.).

6. But as the Church was to last to the end of time, something more was required besides the bestowal of the Sacred Scriptures. It was obviously necessary that the Divine Founder should take every precaution, lest the treasure of heavenly-given truths, possessed by the Church, should ever be destroyed, which would assuredly have happened, had He left those doctrines to each one's private judgment. It stands to reason, therefore, that a living, perpetual "magisterium" was necessary in the Church from the beginning, which, by the command of Christ himself, should besides teaching other wholesome doctrines, give an authoritative explanation of Holy Writ, and which being directed and safeguarded by Christ himself, could by no means commit itself to erroneous teaching. God has provided for these needs most wisely and effectively through His Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, Who placed the true sense of the Scriptures in safety, when He laid upon His Apostles as His primary and most momentous injunction, not to devote themselves to writing, nor to spreading the volumes of the Old Testament indiscriminately and unguardedly among the multitude, but to teach all nations with the living voice, and to lead them by speech to the knowledge and profession of His Heavenly doctrine: "Going into the whole world preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.) But the supreme teaching authority was committed to one, on whom, as on its foundation, the Church must rest. For Christ when He gave the keys to Peter, gave him at the same time the power to govern those who were charged with the "ministry of the word:" "Confirm thy Brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). And since the faithful must learn from the "magisterium" of the Church whatever pertains to the salvation of their souls, it follows that they must also learn from it the true meaning of Scripture.

7. It is easy to perceive how unsafe, how inadequate, and how useless is the method propounded by those who think that the only way to interpret Scripture is by the help of Scripture itself. For on that principle the ultimate law of interpretation would rest with the individual judgment. But, as we have already stated, each one will undertake the reading of Scripture with entirely different feelings, views, and prepossessions, and will interpret God's written Word accordingly. The result will be that those divergent interpretations will necessarily produce discussions and disputes, and thus turn what was intended as a source of union and peace into a source of contention and strife.

8. The truth of what We have just stated is proven by what has actually taken place since, of all the sects, deprived as they are of the Catholic Faith and disagreeing among themselves on religious matters, each one claims that its own teaching and practices are in accord with Holy Writ. There is no gift of God so sacred, that man cannot abuse it to his own detriment; since, according to the stern warning of Blessed Peter, "the unlearned and unstable wrest" the very Scriptures "to their own destruction" (2 Peter iii., 16). Hence Irenaeus, who lived

shortly after the Apostolic age, and who is a faithful interpreter of Apostolic doctrine, always taught that a knowledge of the truth could only be had from the living voice of the Church: "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the spirit of God is found, there is the Church and all grace, and the Spirit is truth" - (Adv. Haer. lib. iii.). "Where, therefore, the gifts of God are placed, it is necessary to learn the truth from those who have in the Church the Apostolic Succession" - (Adv. Haer. lib. iv.). And if Catholics, who may differ on all other matters, are found united in marvellous concord in the faith, there can be no doubt that this is chiefly owing to the authority and power of the "magisterium."

9. We know that many of the Scottish people, who do not agree with us in faith, sincerely love the name of Christ, and strive to ascertain His doctrine and to imitate His most holy example. But how can they obtain what they are striving for, if they do not allow themselves to be taught heavenly things in the way prescribed by Jesus Christ Himself; if they do not give heed to the Church whose precepts they are commanded to obey by the Author of faith as if they were His own: "He who heareth you heareth me; he who despiseth you despiseth me"; if they do not seek the nourishment of their souls, and the sustenance of all virtue, from him whom the Supreme Pastor of souls made His vicegerent, to whom He confided the care of the universal Church? In the meantime We are resolved not to fail in doing Our share, and especially to be constant in fervent prayer, that God may move their minds to what is good, and vouchsafe to impart to them the most powerful impulses of His grace. May the Divine clemency, thus earnestly implored by Us, grant to the Church that supreme consolation of speedily embracing the whole Scottish people, restored to the faith of their forefathers "in spirit and in truth." What incalculable blessings would not accrue to them, if they were once more united to us? Perfect and absolute truth would everywhere shine forth, together with the inestimable gifts which were forfeited by separation. There is one amongst all others, the loss of which is more deplorable than words can express; We allude to the most holy Sacrifice in which Jesus Christ, both Priest and Victim, daily offers Himself to His Father, through the ministry of His priests on earth. By virtue of this Sacrifice the infinite merits of Christ, gained by His Precious Blood shed once upon the Cross for the salvation of men, are applied to our souls. This belief prevailed among the Scottish people in St. Columba's day and in subsequent ages, when your grand and majestic cathedrals were raised throughout the land, which still testify to the art and piety of your ancestors.

10. Now the very essence of Religion implies Sacrifice. For the perfection of Divine Worship is found in the submissive and reverent acknowledgment that God is the Supreme Lord of all things, by Whose power we and all our belongings exist. This constitutes the very nature of Sacrifice, which, on this account, is emphatically called a "thing Divine." If Sacrifices are abolished, Religion can neither exist nor be conceived. The Evangelical Law is not inferior, but superior, to the Old Law. It brings to perfection what the Old Law had merely begun. But the Sacrifice of the Cross was prefigured by the sacrifices of the Old Covenant long before the Birth of Jesus Christ; and after His Ascension, the same Sacrifice is continued by the

Eucharistic Sacrifice. They greatly err, therefore, who reject this doctrine, as if it diminished the reality and efficacy of the Sacrifice which Christ offered on the Cross. He "was offered once to exhaust the sins of many" - (Heb. ix., 28). That atonement for the sins of men was absolutely complete: nor is there any other atonement besides that of the Cross in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. As Religion must ever be accompanied by a sacrificial rite, it was the Divine counsel of the Redeemer that the Sacrifice of the Cross should be perpetuated. This perpetuity is in the most Holy Eucharist, which is not an empty similitude or a mere commemoration, but the very Sacrifice flows from the death of Christ: "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great, among the Gentiles" (Mal. i. 2).

11. It remains for Us now to address the Catholics in a more special manner, and We do so in order that they should cooperate with Us in realizing what We have at heart. Christian charity bids each one labour, according to his opportunities, for the salvation of his fellow men. We therefore call upon them first of all constantly to offer prayers and supplications to God, Who alone can give the necessary light to the minds of men, and dispose their wills as He pleases. And furthermore, as example is most powerful, let them show themselves worthy of the truth which through Divine mercy they possess, and let them recommend the faith which they hold by edifying and stainless lives. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works" (Matth. v., 16). Let them at the same time distinguish themselves by the practice of virtue in public life, so that it should be more and more clearly shown that Catholicism cannot be said, without calumny, to run counter to the interests of the State: but that, on the contrary, nothing else contributes so much to the honourable and successful discharge of social duties.

12. It is likewise of vital importance to defend most strenuously, to establish more firmly, and to surround with every safeguard, the Catholic education of youth. We are not unmindful of the fact that in Scotland thoroughly efficient schools exist, in which the best method of teaching is to be found. But every effort must be put forth, and every sacrifice must be made, so that Catholic schools should be second to none in point of efficiency. We must not allow our youth to be inferior to others in literary attainments, or in learning, which the Christian faith demands as its honourable accompaniments with a view to its defence and adornment. The love of Religion and country requires that whatever institutions Catholics already possess for the purposes of primary, intermediate, or higher education, should, by the due and proportionate cooperation of all, be consolidated and extended. Justice similarly demands that the education and training of the clergy should be most zealously promoted, as they cannot now-a-days occupy worthily and usefully their position, unless they have the prestige of wide erudition and solid learning. In this connection, We can find no institution more worthy of being recommended than Blairs College. An excellent and noble work, begun with exceptional zeal and generosity by one devoted Catholic, this institution should not be allowed to decline and disappear by neglect, but should be sustained by a similar charity, and

completed as soon as possible. This will be tantamount to making provision that for nearly the whole of Scotland, priests will be trained and educated according to the needs of the present time.

13. All these things, Venerable Brethren, which Our affection for the Scottish people has suggested to Us, we commend to your thoughtfulness and charity. Continue to exercise that zeal of which you have given Us such abundant proof, so that everything may be effected which may conduce to the realization of what we have in view. The matter in hand is extremely difficult, and one the accomplishment of which, as We have repeatedly stated, surpasses all human efforts; but it is most holy and desirable, and in perfect harmony with the counsels of Divine Goodness. Wherefore, We are not so much deterred by the difficulties, as We are encouraged by the conviction that the Divine help will not fail, if you devote yourselves to the fulfilment of these Our wishes and behests.

14. As a pledge of Divine grace, and as a token of Our fatherly affection, We lovingly impart to you, in the Lord, Venerable brethren, to your clergy and people our Apostolic Blessing.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, the 25th day of July, in the year 1898, and the twenty-first of Our Pontificate.