



On Conditions In Spain

Cum Multa

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII promulgated on December 8, 1882.

To Our Venerable Brethren and Beloved Sons, the Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Spain.

Venerable Brethren and Beloved Sons, Health and the Apostolic Benediction.

Many are the points in which the noble and generous Spanish nation has shown itself preeminent; but above all others, and worthy of the highest praise, is their preservation, through so varied a succession of men and of events, of that love of the Catholic faith with which the prosperity and greatness of Spain have always appeared to be bound up. Of this affection various proofs might be mentioned, but the chief one is that peculiar devotion to this Apostolic Chair of which Spaniards have given such repeated and striking testimony by all manner of manifestations, by letters, by their liberality, and by their pilgrimages. The recollection must still be fresh of that recent period when Europe beheld their courage and their piety, at a time when the Holy See became a victim of dire and unfortunate circumstances.

2. In all this, Beloved Sons and Venerable Brethren, We recognize not only a special grace from God but the fruit of your zeal, and likewise the allpraiseworthy disposition of the people itself, which in these times, so hostile to Catholic interests, clings with the greatest watchfulness to the religion of its fathers as to an inheritance, and does not hesitate to oppose itself to the greatness of the danger with an equal greatness of resolution. Nothing can be more hopeful for Spain, if only these dispositions be quickened by charity and strengthened by a lasting harmony.

3. But on this point We cannot suppress the truth; when We mark the conduct which some Spaniards deem themselves justified in pursuing, We experience a feeling akin to that anxious solicitude of the Apostle St. Paul for the Corinthians.

The perfect union of Catholics among themselves, and especially with their Bishops, had ever been secure and undisturbed in Spain, and led Our predecessor, Gregory XVI., to address to the Spanish people the well-merited eulogium that "the immense majority had persevered in its ancient reverence towards the Bishops and the inferior clergy canonically instituted." [1] But now, owing to party rivalry, signs are showing themselves of dissensions which are dividing minds, as it were, into different camps, and greatly disturbing even societies founded for a purely religious object. It happens often that in discussions as to the best manner of defending Catholic interests the authority of the Bishops has not that weight which should belong to it. Sometimes even, if a Bishop recommends or decrees something in virtue of his power, there are people who will submit to it but ill, or even openly criticize it, assuming that he has wished thereby to favor some or hinder others.

4. Yet it is easy to see how important it is that unity should exist among the minds of men, and all the more so that, amid the unfettered prevalence everywhere of error and in the war so violently and insidiously waged against the Catholic Church, it is absolutely necessary that all Christians would unite their wills and powers in resistance, for fear that separately they may be crushed by the cunning and violence of their foes.

5. Moved, therefore, by the thought of such dangers, We have addressed these Letters to you, Beloved Sons, Venerable Brethren; and We most earnestly call upon you to be the interpreters of Our salutary warning, and to employ your wisdom and your authority in the maintenance of concord.

6. Here, however, it will be fitting to recall the mutual relations of the spiritual and of the temporal order, for many minds on this matter fall into a two-fold error. There are some, for instance, who are not satisfied with distinguishing between politics and religion but separate and completely isolate the one from the other; they wish them to have nothing in common, and imagine that the one should exercise no influence over the other. Such men, in truth, differ but little from those who desire the exclusion of God, the Creator and Sovereign of all things, from the constitution and administration of the State; and the error they profess is the more pernicious that they thereby rashly debar the State from its most abundant source of prosperity. The moment religion is removed, those principles are of necessity shaken on which the public welfare most of all rests, and which derive their greatest force from religion, among the first of which are government with justice and moderation, obedience from a sense of duty, the submission of the passions to the yoke of virtue, to render to each his due, to leave untouched that which is another's.

7. But, though this opinion is to be avoided, the contrary error must likewise be shunned of those who identify religion with some one political party and confound these together to such a degree as to look on all of another party as undeserving any longer of the name of Catholic. This is an intrusion of political factions into the

August realm of the Church; it is an attempt to break the union of brothers, and to open the gate and give access to a multitude of grievous troubles.

8. The spiritual and temporal orders being, therefore, distinct in their origin and in their nature, should be conceived and judged of as such. For matters of the temporary order -- however lawful, however important they be--do not extend, when considered in themselves, beyond the limits of that life which we live on this our earth. But religion, born of God, and referring all things to God, takes a higher flight and touches heaven. For her will, her wish, is to penetrate the soul, man's best part, with the knowledge and the love of God and to lead in safety the whole human race to that City of the Future which we seek for.

9. It is, then, right to look on religion, and whatever is connected by any particular bond with it, as belonging to a higher order. Hence, in the vicissitudes of human affairs, and even in the very revolutions in States, religion, which is the supreme good, should remain intact; for it embraces all times and all places. Men of opposite parties, though differing in all else, should be agreed unanimously in this: that in the State the Catholic religion should be preserved in all its integrity. To this noble and indispensable aim, all who love the Catholic religion ought, as if bound by a compact, to direct all their efforts; they should be somewhat silent about their various political opinions, which they are, however, at perfect liberty to ventilate in their proper place: for the Church is far from condemning such matters, when they are not opposed to religion or justice; apart and removed from all the turmoil of strife, she carries on her work of fostering the common weal, and of cherishing all men with the love of a mother, those particularly whose faith and piety are greatest.

10. The fundamental principle of this concord of which We speak is at once the same in religion and in every rightly constituted State; it is obedience to the lawful authority which orders, forbids, directs, legislates, and thus establishes harmonious union amid the diverse minds of men. We shall here have to repeat some well-known truths, which, however, ought not to be the subjects of mere speculative knowledge, but should become rules applicable to the practice of life.

11. Now, even as the Roman Pontiff is the Teacher and Prince of the Universal Church, so likewise are Bishops the rulers and chiefs of the Churches that have been duly entrusted to them. Each has within his own jurisdiction the power of leading, supporting, or correcting, and generally of deciding in such matters as may seem to affect religion. For they share in the power which Christ Our Lord received from the Father, and transmitted to His Church: and therefore Gregory IX., Our Predecessor, said of Bishops, "We do not hesitate to declare that the Bishops called on to share Our cares are the representatives of God"[2] This power has been given to Bishops for the supreme benefit of those over whom it is exercised; it tends by its very nature to the building up of the Body of Christ; and makes of each Bishop and bond which unites in faith and charity the Christians under his guidance at once with one another and with the Supreme Pontiff, as

members with the head. Here is a weighty expression of St. Cyprian's: "The Church is the people united with its pastors, and the flock that follows its Shepherd: "[3] and another, still more weighty: "Know ye, that the Bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the Bishop: and if any one be not with the Bishop, the same is not in the Church"[4] Such, unchangeable and everlasting, is the constitution of the Christian commonwealth; if it be not religiously maintained, a disturbance of rights and duties ensues as a necessary consequence of the broken association of the members whose perfect union constitutes the body of the Church, that body which "by joints and bands being supplied with nourishment and compacted, groweth unto the increase of God"[5] We see, therefore, that Bishops should have paid to them that respect which the eminence of their charge exacts, and receive in all matters within their office a perfect obedience.

12. In face of the passions that at this moment are troubling the minds of so many in Spain, We exhort, nay, We conjure, all Spaniards to recall this so important duty and to fulfill it with all zeal. Let those, especially, who are of the clergy, and whose words and example exercise such potent influence, scrupulously apply themselves to observe moderation and obedience. For be it known to them that their toil in the fulfillment of their duties will be most profitable to themselves and efficacious to their neighbor, when they follow in full submission the guidance of him who is placed over them as head of the diocese. Assuredly it is not conduct consonant with the duties of the priesthood to give oneself up so entirely to the rivalries of parties as to appear more busy with the things of men than with those of God.

13. They must, therefore, studiously avoid overstepping the reserve imposed on them by their office. If they only observe this rule faithfully, We are convinced that the Spanish clergy will render daily by their virtues, their wisdom, and their labors the greatest services at once to the salvation of souls and to the interests of the State.

14. We deem those associations peculiarly fitted to aid them in this work which are, so to speak, the auxiliary forces destined to support the interests of the Catholic religion; and We approve, therefore, their object and the energy they display; We ardently desire that they may increase in number and in zeal, and that from day to day their fruits may be more abundant. But since the object of such societies is the defense and encouragement of Catholic interests, and as it is the Bishops who, each in their proper diocese, have to watch over those interests, it naturally follows that they should be controlled by their Bishops, and should set great value on their authority and commands. In the next place they should with equal care apply themselves to preserving union, first because on the agreement of men's wills all the power and influence of any human society depends; and next, because in the societies of which We speak that mutual charity should especially be found which necessarily accompanies good works and is the characteristic trait of those whom Christian discipline has moulded. Now as it may easily happen that the members may differ on politics, they should recall to themselves the aim of all Catholic associations, and thereby prevent political partisanship from disturbing

their cordial unity. In their discussions the members ought to be so completely penetrated by the thought of the purpose they united for as to seem of no party, remembering the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free For you are all one in Christ Jesus"[6]. Such rules of conduct will lead not only to amiable and friendly relations among the several members of these societies, but also between societies of a similar character, an object extremely desirable. Thus, by the exclusion of party rivalries, the principal sources of dispute will be avoided; and all will be enlisted in the service of the one cause, the highest and noblest, about which no disagreement can exist among Catholics worthy of the name.

15. Lastly it is most important that those who defend the interests of religion in the press, and particularly in the daily papers, should take up the same attitude. We are aware of the objects they strive to attain and the intentions with which they have entered the arena, and We cannot but concede to them well-earned praise for their good service to the Catholic religion. But so lofty, so noble, is the cause to which they have devoted themselves, that it exacts from the defenders of truth and justice a rigorous observance of numerous duties which they must not fail to fulfill; and in seeking to accomplish some of these, the others must not be neglected. The admonitions, therefore, which we have given to associations, We likewise give to writers; We exhort them to remove all dissensions by their gentleness and moderation, and to preserve concord amongst themselves and in the people, for the influence of writers is great on either side. But nothing can be more opposed to concord than biting words, rash judgments, or perfidious insinuations, and everything of this kind should be shunned with the greatest care and held in the utmost abhorrence. A discussion in which are concerned the sacred rights of the Church and the doctrines of the Catholic religion should not be acrimonious, but calm and temperate; it is weight of reasoning, and not violence and bitterness of language, which must win victory for the Catholic writer.

16. These rules of conduct will be, in Our judgment, of great use in removing the causes which impede perfect concord. It will be your task, Beloved Sons, Venerable Brethren, to explain Our thoughts to the people and to endeavor to the utmost of your power to make all conform their lives to the rules We have here laid down.

17. We are confident that the faithful of Spain will embrace them of their own accord, as well from their tried devotion to this Apostolic Chair, as from a sense of the benefits which are rightly to be expected from concord. Let them recall the facts of their own history; let them recognize that the glorious exploits of their ancestors at home and abroad could not have been achieved had their forces been scattered by dissensions, and were only possible owing to their perfect union. Animated by brotherly love and all inspired by the same sentiments, they triumphed over the haughty domination of the Moors, over heresy, and over schism. Let the faithful of Spain imitate the example of those from whom they have inherited faith and fame, and show that they inherit not only their ancestors'

name but their virtues also.

18. We believe, moreover, Beloved Sons and Venerable Brethren, that to promote union and uniformity in discipline, it will be well that the Bishops of each province should often deliberate among themselves and with their Archbishop, consult about one another's interests, and, when circumstances require it, address themselves to that Apostolic See whence flow the integrity of faith, the power of discipline, and the light of truth. The numerous pilgrimages which are being projected in Spain will afford a most favorable opportunity. Nothing can, indeed, be more fit to allay dissensions and to decide controversies than the voice of him whom Our Lord Jesus Christ has constituted the Vicar of His power, and the wealth of heavenly graces which flow in streams from the tomb of the Apostles.

19. But, since all "our strength is of God," join yourselves with Us in fervent prayer to God that He may give efficacy to Our teaching and render the people ready to receive it with docility. May the august Mother of God, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Patroness of Spain, deign to favor Our common efforts! May We also be helped by the Apostle St. James and St. Teresa of Jesus, the virgin law-giver and great light of Spanish wisdom, in whom the love of concord, affection for her country, and perfect Christian obedience were equally conspicuous.

20. In the meanwhile, as a pledge of Heavenly gifts and in token of Our fatherly good-will, We here lovingly bestow on you in the Lord, Beloved Sons, Venerable Brethren, and on all the people of Spain, Our Apostolic Benediction.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 8th day of December, 1882, in the fifth year of Our Pontificate.

Endnotes:

1. Alloc. "Affictas," 1st, March, (1841).
2. Epist. 198, lib. 13.
3. Epist. 69, "Ad Papianum."
4. Ibid.
5. Colossians ii, 19.
6. Galatians, iii., 27-28.