



On The Education Of Clergy

Paternae

Encyclical Of Pope Leo XIII September 18, 1899

To the Archbishops and Bishops of Brazil. Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

1. We rejoice that the fruit of Our paternal concern for your nation has been great, due especially to your efforts. Clinging to Our instructions in the apostolic letter which We gave on July 2, 1894, you have labored to arouse piety in the laity and to revive the old discipline in the clergy. Nor are We ignorant of how great an effort you expended to preserve the safety and rights of the religious societies which have come forth from the old religious communities of your region in order to recall them to their pristine glory. Clerics from Europe are profitably associated with these societies. The noble ardor of these European brothers was not inhibited by the long voyage, nor by the inclemency of the weather, nor by the difference in customs. In addition, many groups founded recently were summoned by your zeal to establish or to govern colleges, to engage in missions, or to perform other functions of the priestly ministry for which the number of your clergy scarcely sufficed. It must be a great consolation to you that your seminaries have increased in number and have been improved.

2. These happy beginnings and the progress realized up to now inspire Us to hope that the time is not far away when your hierarchy, already enlarged by Us, will respond with greater growth. We base Our hope on your proven zeal and your well-known diligence and on the Brazilian people themselves, who are inclined to piety both by character and by custom.

3. However, there are some things which are so important for the progress of the Catholic religion that it does not suffice to mention them only once; they demand to be recalled and recommended often. Such is the concern for establishing seminaries, to the condition of which the future fortunes of the Church are

intimately joined. Therefore, in setting up their discipline, that which some bishops have already performed should be your highest priority: that the aspirants to the priesthood should live in special houses called "seminaries" with their own rules and laws. The houses for young people destined for civil life, can be called episcopal colleges. Experience indicates that mixed seminaries do not respond effectively to the plan and the wisdom of the Church. This common life with the laity is the principal reason clerics abandon their vocation. We should accustom future clerics from an early age to bear the yoke of the Lord, to find time for spiritual exercises, to be devoted to their sacred duties, and to conform themselves to the example of the priestly life. Therefore, they should be protected from dangers, separated from everything worldly, and educated according to the rules set forth by Saint Charles Borromeo just as We see accomplished in the major seminaries of Europe.

4. In order to avoid dangers, vacations in the country should be provided for these students, but they should not return to their homes. Many bad examples lie in wait for the unwary, especially in settlements where the families of workers are crowded together. Thus, these young men, inclined toward youthful desires, may be either turned away from their undertaking or they, as future priests, may become a stumbling block to the people. We recommend this system to you which has already been tried with good results by several bishops. We ask that you improve the protection of the young clergy in the future by a law commonly agreed upon.

5. It is also Our desire, as We have already told you, that effort should be devoted to publishing and distributing Catholic newspapers since at the present time the people form their opinions and draw their moral guidelines from no other source than from the daily reading of such newspapers. It is with regret that We see these weapons cast down among good people since these are drawn from the hands of the impious and lead to the ruin of faith and morals. Therefore, the style of your newspapers should be sharpened and the literary expression aroused so that frivolity may give way to truth and the minds of men may gradually follow the voice of right reason.

6. Joined to the advantage of the religious press is another advantage, that which results from the access of Catholics to public office and from their admission to the legislative assemblies. For the word is no less powerful than the pen; influence and authority can serve the good cause as well as the written word. It would even be appropriate to send men in holy orders to these legislative assemblies.

7. But they should beware lest the effort made toward this end be so great that they seem to be motivated more by miserable ambition and blind partisanship than by love of the Catholic cause. What is more undignified than that clerics engage in struggle, and by their administration of the State introduce sedition and discord, the most pernicious things for the State? And what if, following bad counsel, they continually oppose the established authority?

8. The only result of such behavior is a great scandal for the people and a source of ill-feeling toward the clergy. Civil power should be exercised with moderation; every suspicion of ambition should be avoided; public offices should be won prudently, and no deviation should be made from true obedience to the supreme authority.

9. It pleases Us to encourage those arts by which the Christian cause may be promoted among you. May your resources not be less than your good will and may the realization of your excellent plans not be hindered by the lack of money! Contrary to the past, the public treasury no longer provides money for you, for the canons, for the seminaries, for the priests, or for the construction of churches. That leaves you only one resource: the charity of the people. Nonetheless, the custom of the Brazilian people offers great hope in this matter; they are always ready to be generous, especially when this results in obtaining the favors of the Church. We have already praised them in Our letter mentioned above in which We said that We command nothing concerning the endowment of the poorest of the new dioceses; We have confidence in the piety and the faith of the Brazilians that they will not abandon their bishops.

10. We would place before you as an example the liberality with which the Catholics of North America come to the aid of their numerous bishops, their Catholic colleges, schools, and other religious institutions, but your nation abounds in similar, magnificent examples. We have not forgotten how many splendid churches your ancestors constructed, how many monasteries they endowed, and what great monuments of Christian piety and kindness they left for you.

11. There are many ways to come to the aid of the Church. The most useful, in Our opinion, is to establish in each diocese a fund to which the faithful can contribute an annual offering collected by men and women selected from the more noble families, under the orders and direction of the priests. These people should also be the principal givers. They will accomplish this best if they give something from their assured income which is often very considerable, and if from their uncertain income they impose on themselves a contribution like a tax.

12. Another aid, no less important, can be furnished to poor bishops by the monasteries and the pious associations which have a surplus. These associations would contribute more to the common good if they gave the sum of money which some of them are accustomed to spend on public shows to the diocesan fund.

13. Finally, if the wealthier of the faithful want to follow the laudable custom of their ancestors and to exercise their kindness by making provision in their wills for religious associations or other pious groups, We strongly encourage them to bequeath a portion of their fortune to the bishops so that the bishops, provided with resources, might guard the interests of the Church and their own dignity.

14. We have promoted your cause, Venerable Brothers. The injustices of the age

compel even Us to have recourse to Peter's pence constantly. Take courage in the thought that you can have confidence in God "because He Himself takes care of Us."¹ Keep in mind these words of the Apostle: "He who provides seed for the sower and bread for the eater will provide in abundance; He will multiply the seed you sow and increase the yield of your righteousness."²

15. May the priests and people at whose head the Holy Spirit placed you as bishops keep before their eyes the liberality of the first Christians who "were of one heart and one mind"³ who, more concerned for the society of the Church than for their own fortune, "sold their property, brought the price, and placed it at the feet of the apostles."⁴ May they remember the words of Paul with which We shall conclude: "We beg you, brothers, respect those among you whose task it is to exercise authority in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them with the greatest love because of their work."⁵

16. Meanwhile, as a pledge of heavenly blessings and as a sign of Our good will, We affectionately give Our apostolic blessing to you, venerable brothers, to your clergy, and to your people.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's on the eighteenth day of September in the year 1899, the twenty-second year of Our pontificate.

Endnotes

1. 1 Pt 5.7.
2. 2 Cor 9.10.
3. Acts 4.32.
4. Acts 4.34-35.
5. 1 Thes 5.12-13.