



## **Ecclesiam Dei**

*To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.*

The Church of God, by a wondrous act of Divine Providence, was so fashioned as to become in the fullness of time an immense family which embraces all men. The Church possesses-a fact known to all-as one of its visible marks, impressed on it by God, that of a world-wide unity. Christ, Our Lord, not only entrusted to His Apostles and, to them alone, the mission which He had received from His Father when he said: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations;" (Matt. xxvii, 18, 19) He also wished the College of Apostles to possess perfect unity, a unity based on a twofold and well-knit bond, one bond internal, that of the selfsame faith and charity which is "poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Romans v, 5); the other external, that of the rule of one of the Apostles over all the others, for He conferred upon Peter a primacy over the Apostles as a perpetual principle and visible foundation for the Church's unity. At the close of His mortal life, he impressed upon the Apostles in the strongest possible terms the supreme need of this unity. (John xvii, 11, 21, 22) In His last soul-stirring prayer he asked His Father for this unity and His prayer was heard: "He was heard for his reverence." (Hebrews v, 7)

2. The Church was born in unity and grew into "a single body," vigorous, animated by a single soul, of which "the head is Christ from whom the whole body is compacted and fitly joined together." (Ephesians iv, 15, 16) Of this body, following the reasoning of St. Paul, He is the visible head who takes the place of Christ here upon earth, the Roman Pontiff. In him, as the successor of St. Peter, the words of Christ are being forever fulfilled: "Upon this rock I will build my Church." (Matt. xvi, 18) And the Pope who, down the ages, exercises the office which was bestowed upon Peter never ceases to confirm in the Faith, whenever it is necessary, his brethren and to feed all the sheep and lambs of the Master's flock.

3. No prerogative of the Church has been assailed more bitterly by "the enemy" than this unity of government, by means of which the "unity of the Spirit" is joined

"in the bond of peace." (Ephesians iv, 3) It is quite true that the enemy has never, and never will, prevail against the Church. He has, however, succeeded in wresting from her bosom many of her children, and in some cases, even whole nations. These great losses were brought about in many instances by the wars which divided nations, by the enactment of laws inimical to the interests of religion and of virtue, or by an unbridled love for the passing goods of this world.

4. The greatest and most deplorable defection of all was the separation of the Greeks from the unity of the Church Universal. The Councils of Lyons and Florence held out hopes of healing this breach; these hopes were illusory. The schism was renewed and has lasted to the present day, with enormous injury to souls. By this great schism the Eastern Slavs, together with other nations, were also led astray and lost to the Faith, although it must be acknowledged that they remained longer in communion with the Church than many of their neighbors. As is well known, they maintained relations of one kind or another with this Apostolic See even after the schism of Michael Caerularius-relations which, despite the fact that they were interrupted by the invasions of the Tartars and Mongols, were resumed afterward and continued until they were brought to an end by the rebellious hard-headedness of their rulers.

5. On their side the Roman Pontiffs left nothing undone to bring back these peoples to the unity of the Church. Some popes even made the salvation of the Eastern Slavs one of the most important purposes of their pontificates. Thus, Gregory XII, at the request of the son of the king who happened to be in Rome, sent a most gracious letter (Migne, Pat. Lat. col. 425, t. 148, Ep. Book 2, Letter 74) containing good wishes for every heavenly blessing to his father, the Prince of Kiev, "Dimitry, King of the Russians, and to the Queen, his consort," at the beginning of their reign. Honorius III sent his legates to the City of Novogrodek and Gregory IX repeated this gracious act. Not long afterward Innocent IV sent as his legate, a man of noble and strong character, Giovanni di Pian Carpino, one of the most famous Franciscans then living. The good results of such loving solicitude on the part of Our Predecessors began to appear in the year 1225 when concord and unity were restored between the two parties. To commemorate this event the Papal Legate, the Abbot Opizone, in the name and by the authority of the Pope himself, crowned with all solemnity Daniel, the son of Romano. Following this act, in accordance with the venerable traditions and ancient customs of the Eastern Slavs, Isidore, Metropolitan of Kiev and Moscow, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, promised at the Council of Florence, in the name and speaking the language of his compatriots, to preserve holy and inviolate Catholic unity in communion with the Holy See.

6. This union with Kiev, which had thus been restored, endured for many years. The political disturbances at the beginning of the sixteenth century again brought about an interruption of relations. These relations, however, were happily resumed in 1595, and in the following year, at the Treaty of Brest, unity was solemnly proclaimed due to the efforts of the Metropolitan of Kiev and of other Ruthenian

bishops. Clement VIII received these bishops with deep affection, to which he gave expression in the Constitution *Magnus Dominus*, where he asked that all the faithful render thanks to God "who always thinks thoughts of peace and wishes all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

7. In order that this unity and concord might be perpetuated forever, God, in His supreme providence consecrated it, so to speak, by the seal of sanctity and of martyrdom. The great privilege of being both a saint and martyr belongs to Josaphat, Archbishop of Polotsk, of the Eastern Slavic Rite, who is rightly looked upon as the glory and support of the Eastern Slavs. Certainly it would be difficult to discover another man who has brought greater luster to his people or who has done more for their eternal welfare than he, their pastor and apostle. This is particularly evidenced by the fact that he shed his very blood in order to preserve the unity of Holy Church.

8. On the occasion of the Third Centenary of his glorious martyrdom which is at hand, it gives Us great pleasure to call again to your memory the name of this hero in order that Our Lord, in answer to the prayers of his many fervent children, "may awaken in His Church that spirit which filled the blessed martyr and bishop Josaphat, who gave his life for his sheep." (Office of St. Josaphat) As zeal for the unity of the Church increases among the faithful, so in the same ratio the work which he had so much at heart will increase, until the time shall come when the promise of Christ, as well as the desire of all His Saints, will be fulfilled, and there will be "one fold and one shepherd." (John x, 16)

9. Our Saint was born of schismatic parents but was baptized validly and received the name of John. From his earliest years he lived a saintly life. Although he was much impressed by the splendors of the Slavic liturgy, he always sought therein first and foremost the truth and glory of God. Because of this, and not because he was impressed by arguments, even as a child he turned towards communion with the Ecumenical, that is, the Catholic Church. Of this Church he always considered himself a member because of the valid baptism which he had received. What is more, he felt himself called by a special Providence to re-establish everywhere the holy unity of the Church. He was quick to realize that the cause of unity would be greatly served by the return to the Catholic Church of those who followed the Eastern Slavic Rite and of the Basilian monks. To further this end he himself in 1604 joined the Monks of St. Basil, and changed his name from John to that of Josaphat. As a monk, he consecrated himself body and soul to the practice of every virtue, and particularly to the virtues of mercy and penance. At all times he manifested a truly singular love for the Cross, a love which he had learned in his childhood by constant meditation on Jesus Crucified.

10. The Metropolitan of Kiev, Joseph Velamin Rutsky, who was also archimandrite of this monastery, tells us that Josaphat "in a short time made such progress in the monastic life that he could have become the master of the other monks." Almost immediately after his ordination, Josaphat found himself elected archimandrite and

head of the monastery. In the government of the community he strove not only to protect and to defend the temporalities of the monastery and of the church attached to it against the assaults which were being made against them, but also, having found out that these holy places had been practically abandoned by the faithful, did all within his power to have the Christian people frequent them once again. At the same time, having greatly at heart the reunion of his compatriots with the Chair of Peter, he sought to discover arguments which would help to promote and to make secure this union. For this reason he studied principally the liturgical books which the Orientals and even the Schismatics use, according to the regulations laid down by the Holy Fathers of the Church.

11. Having thus prepared himself well, he began firmly but with kindness to plead the cause of the restoration of unity. His success was immediate, so much so that even his adversaries bestowed upon him the title "winner of souls." Marvelous in truth was the number of souls which he led back to the unity of the Fold of Jesus Christ, made up of all classes, peasants, merchants, nobles, prefects, and governors of provinces—a fact which is narrated by Sokolinski of Polotsk, by Tyszhkievich of Novogrodek, and by Mieleczko of Smolensk. After he was appointed bishop of Polotsk he extended greatly the field of his apostolate, an apostolate which could not but bring about extraordinary results due to the example which he gave of a life of inviolate chastity, poverty, and frugality joined with such openhandedness toward the poor that he even went to the length of pawning his own *omophorion* in order to care for their needs.

12. Our Saint, however, always remained strictly within the confines of religious work, never mixing in politics, despite the fact that more than once he was earnestly solicited to take sides with one or other political faction. As a holy bishop, he strove zealously, both by his writings and his sermons, to make known the truth at all times. In addition to his preaching he published a number of volumes written in a popular style on such subjects as the primacy of Peter, the baptism of St. Vladimir, an apology of Catholic unity, a catechism which followed the methods of St. Peter Canisius, and many other similar works. Furthermore, he occupied himself much in exhorting both the secular and regular clergy to a higher appreciation of their holy office. With their zealous and sincere co-operation, which he had inspired, he succeeded in having the people, after they had been instructed in Christian doctrine and nourished by the preaching of the word of God in a way adapted to their peculiar needs, frequent the Sacraments and the functions of the sacred liturgy, with the result that they, too, began to adopt a way of life more and more conformable to their beliefs. Thus, having first of all succeeded in spreading about widely the spirit of God, St. Josaphat was in a position to make secure the work for Christian unity to which he had dedicated his life. This work of consolidation, even of consecration, he achieved more by his martyrdom than by any other act, an ending to his life which he faced with enthusiasm and admirable greatness of soul.

13. He was convinced that he would be martyred, and often spoke of the possibility

of such an event occurring. In one of his famous sermons he expressed a desire to be martyred; he prayed ardently to God for martyrdom as if it would be for him a singularly blessed gift. A few days before his death when he was warned of plots that were being laid against him, he said: "Lord, grant me the grace to shed my blood for the unity of the church and in behalf of obedience to the Holy See." On Sunday, November 13, 1623, his desire was realized. Surrounded by enemies who had gone in search of the Apostle of Unity, he went forth smiling and gladly to meet his fate. He asked them, following the example of his Lord and Master, not to harm the members of his household, and then gave himself into their hands. He was set upon and killed in a most barbarous fashion. Despite his wounds he did not cease till his dying breath to implore God's pardon for his murderers.

14. Great indeed were the fruits of this glorious martyrdom, especially among the Ruthenian bishops who knew how to draw from his death a living example of firmness and courage, as they themselves testified two months later in a letter sent to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda: "We too are ready, as one of our number has already done, to offer our life's blood for the Catholic religion." As a result of and almost immediately after this martyrdom, a great number of people, among whom were the very murderers of the Saint, returned to the bosom of the unity of the Church of Christ.

15. The blood of St. Josaphat even today, as it was three hundred years ago, is a very special pledge of peace, the seal of unity. We call it a very special pledge for the present times because those unhappy Slavic provinces, torn by disturbances of all kinds and by insurrections, have been empurpled with the blood spilt in the terrible and inhuman wars of our own days. In truth, it seems to us that We hear the voice of that blood "which speaketh better than that of Abel" (Hebrews xii, 24), that We behold Our martyr turning to his Slav brothers and calling out to them in the words of Jesus: "The sheep are without a shepherd. I have compassion on the multitude." Verily, sad is their condition, terrible their distress! Alas, the great number of exiles from their native land, what an awful carnage, what great loss of souls! Looking now as We do at the calamities which have fallen upon the Slavs, certainly greater than those which Our Saint wept over in his time, it is extremely difficult for Us to keep back the tears which well up from Our fatherly heart.

16. To do all We could to lighten this burden of sorrow We hastened to their assistance, thinking only of how best to extend help to the needy, not inspired by human motives, not even making any distinction between the needy themselves, except to assist those first who needed help most. We were greatly handicapped by Our meager resources and could not do everything that We wished. We were powerless, too, before the repeated offenses committed against truth and virtue, before the open contempt for every religious feeling and sentiment, before the persecution, bloody in some places, of the Christian people and of their bishops and priests.

17. The solemn commemoration of the Centenary of the illustrious Pastor of the



Slavs is no small comfort to Us in the face of these great evils. It gives Us a happy occasion to demonstrate to all the Eastern Slavs the fatherly feelings which animate Us as well as an opportunity to place before them their return to the ecumenical unity of Holy Church as the source of all possible blessings.

18. We invite most sincerely the Schismatics to join with Us in this unity of the Church, and We desire also that all the faithful, following the teachings and in the footsteps of St. Josaphat, may strive, each according to his ability, to cooperate with Us towards the achievement of this purpose. May all realize, too, that unity is not so much promoted by discussions or by other artificial means, as by the example of a holy life and by good works, especially those dictated by charity towards our Slav brethren and all other Easterners. This, too, is the thought of the Apostle St. Paul when he writes: "Be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment. Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vain glory; but in humility, let each esteem others better than themselves: each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's," (Philippians ii, 2, 4).

19. To achieve this end, as it is necessary on the one hand for the Schismatic Easterners to lay aside their ancient prejudices and to seek really to know the true life of the Church, not attributing to the Roman Church the faults of mere individuals, faults which she is the first to condemn and seeks as well to correct; so the Latins, on their side, must strive to understand better and more profoundly the history and customs of the Easterners. It was because of an intimate knowledge of these facts that the apostolate of St. Josaphat turned out so successful.

20. It was the development of this purpose that also influenced Us to promote, in as far as We possibly could, the welfare of the Pontifical Oriental Institute which was founded by Our lately deceased predecessor, Benedict XV. We are convinced that from a correct knowledge of the facts there will come a just appreciation of men and, at the same time, that upright spirit of goodwill which, when joined with love of Christ, cannot but assist greatly, God aiding, in the achievement of religious unity.

21. Filled with charity, each man will experience in himself that which was, under divine inspiration, taught by the Apostle: "There is no distinction of the Jew and the Greek: for the same is Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon him." (Romans x, 12) What is much more important is that if men scrupulously obey the teachings of the same Apostle they will not only put aside their prejudices but will also conquer their vain suspicions of one another, their deceits and hatreds, in a word, all those animosities so contrary to the spirit of Christian love, which divide the nations one from another. Listen to what the Apostle St. Paul writes: "Lie not one to another: stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. But Christ is all, and in all." (Colossians iii, 9, 11)

22. If We begin in this way by reconciling individuals and nations with one another, there will come about at the same time unity for the Church, for then there shall return to her bosom all those who have separated from her, no matter what their motives for doing so may have been. The actual effecting of this unity will not be brought about by human effort, but only by the goodness of that God who "is not a respecter of persons" (Acts x, 34) and who "puts no difference between us and them." (Acts xv, 9) In such a union, all nations, no matter what their race, their language, or their liturgy, will enjoy the selfsame rights, for the Roman Church has always and religiously respected and preserved these liturgies. She has even decreed that they must be used, and she has adorned herself with them as with precious garments, like "a queen . . . in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety." (Psalms xlv, 10)

23. Since this communion of all the peoples of the earth in a world-wide unity is, above all things, the work of God, and therefore to be had only with the divine help and assistance, let us have recourse with all care to prayer, following in this both the teachings and example of St. Josaphat, who, in his apostolate for unity, trusted above all else in the power of prayer.

24. Under his guidance and patronage let us especially devote ourselves to honoring the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the pledge and chief cause of unity, that mystery of the Faith which, because of their belief, enabled the Eastern Slavs who, even while they were separated from the Roman Church jealously preserved their faith and love for it, to avoid the impieties of the worst heresies. From it, too, we may hope for those fruits which Holy Mother Church prays for in all confidence at the celebration of this August Mystery, that "God may deign to grant us the gifts of unity and peace, which are represented mystically under the offerings of bread and wine." (Secret of Mass of Feast of Corpus Christi) United, let the Latins and Easterners implore, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, this grace of God; the Easterners "praying to Our Lord for the unity of all," the Latins praying the same Christ, Our Lord, that "taking into consideration the faith of His Church, He may deign to bring it peace and unity according to His Holy Will."

25. Another bond which should serve to unite us with the Eastern Slavs is their truly singular devotion for the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. This love for Mary at one and the same time cuts them off from many heretics and brings them closer to us. Our Saint, too, was conspicuous for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin and with childlike confidence trusted in her favor in his work for unity. He was accustomed to venerate with a special love, after the manner of Easterners, a small icon of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, a picture which is also held in great veneration by the Basilian monks and by the faithful of every rite, here in Rome where in the Church of SS. Sergius and Bacchus it is honored under the title of "Queen of the Pasture." Let us therefore pray to her, our most loving Mother, and especially under this same title, that she may guide the steps of our Schismatic brethren toward the pastures of salvation, toward those pastures where Peter, living always in his successors, the Vicar of the Eternal pastor, feeds and rules the lambs and

sheep of the Fold of Christ.

26. In conclusion, let us turn to all the saints of heaven and ask their intercession so that we may be granted this great grace. In particular, let us have recourse to those saints who were once celebrated among the Easterners for their wisdom and sanctity, and who are still celebrated because of the veneration and devotion of the people for them. And from among all these saints, let us first call upon St. Josaphat that as he was during his lifetime a most strenuous champion of unity, so now before God may he promote and vigorously support the same holy purpose. We, too pray to him, using the selfsame humble words of Our Predecessor of immortal memory, Pius IX: "May God grant that thy blood, O St. Josaphat, which thou didst shed for the Church of Christ, be the pledge of union with this Apostolic See, a union for which thou always didst long, and which thou didst fervently implore day and night from the God of all Goodness and all Power. In order that this may one day come to be, We earnestly desire to have thee as an unfailing advocate before God and the Heavenly Court."

As a pledge of divine favors and a testimony of Our good-will We bestow with all affection the Apostolic Blessing on you, Venerable Brothers, on your clergy, and on your people.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the twelfth day of November, in the year 1923, the second of Our Pontificate.