

Probe Noscitis Venerabiles

Papal Encyclicals / Pope Bl. Pius IX June 16, 1846 - Feb. 7, 1878

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On The Discipline For Clergy

Encyclical Of Pope Pius IX

May 17, 1852

To the Venerable Brothers, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Spanish Kingdom.

Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

You know well, venerable brothers, how concerned We have been even from the beginning of Our Pontificate to review and arrange the affairs of the Catholic Church in Spain. You also recall the Agreement which was entered upon after long and laborious negotiations with Our Daughter in Christ, Maria Isabel, the Catholic Queen of the Spaniards. Nor are you unaware of how zealously We desired to make safe and inviolable certain items in the Agreement itself; namely, that the Church might fully enjoy all the rights which she exercises by divine institution and by the prescriptions of Canon Law, and that all of you should have full and entire liberty to perform your episcopal ministry. We do not doubt, because of your admirable trust in the Church and your paternal solicitude, that you will devote full labor, industry, and diligence to safeguard the liberty of the Church itself and to preserve your episcopal rights; nevertheless, that you may accomplish this, We have thought it well to add to your determination. For this reason We address you with deepest affection, venerable brothers, and We repeatedly call forth your outstanding piety, episcopal virtue, and vigilance. Because of the position you occupy and the dignity with which you are marked, We exhort you to zealously execute and defend all the things which are in the Agreement itself, especially for the safety of the Church and for the liberty to exercise your episcopal ministry. In your wisdom, you know very well how such priestly and faithful unity of mind, will, and opinion is of advantage to the Church. Therefore We earnestly exhort you all to be of one mind and intention: to fight with concord of spirit for the cause and rights of the Church herself, and to exercise freely all aspects of your episcopal duties and sacred ministry in accord with what has been prescribed and sanctioned by the Agreement. But in order that this vital concord of minds and conformity of action may flourish more readily each day, you should confer among yourselves by letter, particularly in important matters like this. Those of you who have received the rank of Archbishop should first communicate the matter among yourselves; after you have diligently weighed everything, you should inform your suffragans of the conclusions reached. In that way, under the stimulus of your religious zeal, all of you may reach unity. With joined forces and shared zeal, you may then be able to promote the greater glory of God, to preserve whole and inviolable the venerable rights of the Church, to labor for the salvation of souls, and to protect a full-preserved freedom to exercise your episcopal ministry. You know what rich and salutary fruits the Christian people have gathered from episcopal councils, especially from the Council of Trent; therefore, after you have corresponded concerning the more serious matters, begin again with all zeal to hold provincial synods. These have been neglected because of the difficulties of the times. Synods will ensure that the needs of each province are accurately perceived and that one norm of action is undertaken. You will thus be able, with God's aid for your singular virtue, prudence, pastoral care, and solicitude, to find again what has been lost by the people entrusted to your vigilance, to restore what has been abandoned, to bind what has been broken, to strengthen what is weak, and to devote all your energy so that our divine religion and its salutary doctrine may flourish in your regions. And do not neglect to reestablish diocesan synods, according to the prescriptions of the same Council of Trent.

2. Devote your constant thoughts and efforts to those who have dedicated themselves to the sacred ministry. See that they remain mindful of their vocation and direct their manner of life according to the standards of the sacred canons and ecclesiastical discipline. They should glow in the gravity of their character, the sanctity of their life, and the praise of their wholesome doctrine. They should also give an example of all the virtues to the Christian people; perform the duties of their ministry fully, skillfully, and religiously; and labor zealously for the salvation of souls. The young clergy, even from their earliest years, should be guided opportunely toward piety, virtue, and an ecclesiastical spirit. See that they are diligently taught literature, especially the sacred disciplines, untouched by the danger of any error. The faithful entrusted to you should be nourished daily with the words of faith and strengthened by the spiritual gifts of grace so that they can grow in the knowledge of God and walk in the ways of the Lord; they must never permit themselves to be deceived and led into error by the manufacturers of lies and the followers of perverse dogmas. Since, however, as each one of you well understands, nothing contributes more to the preservation of sacred and public affairs than the proper education of youth. Therefore, watch carefully that in all the public and private schools a doctrine entirely Catholic is taught and that the young people are trained scrupulously according to the precepts of our holy religion.

3. We know the great anxieties and difficulties, especially in these evil times, that the episcopal ministry is exposed to; We also know how you must constantly labor and keep watch to fulfill the duties of your vital ministry. But no labor or difficulty must ever keep you from the duty of your proper office. Relying on divine help, act manfully for the glory of God, for the cause of His most holy Church, and for the eternal salvation of men; keep before your eyes the incorruptible crown of glory promised by the eternal Prince of Pastors to those who persevere. We are completely convinced that you will comply fully with these Our desires; We also have confidence that Our dear and pious daughter in Christ, Maria Isabel, and her ministers will realize how greatly Our holy religion and its doctrines add to the happiness and tranquility of their people. Thus you will have their powerful patronage by which you will be able to exercise all the duties of your episcopal ministry in prosperity and happiness.

4. Meanwhile, We will pour out fervent prayers to the most clement Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, that in the abundance of His

divine grace He may always look with favor on you and bless your pastoral labors and cares. It is after all by your efforts that the faithful entrusted to your care walk worthily, pleasing God in all things and bearing fruit in all good works. As an auspice of this heavenly aid and a proof of Our most ardent love for you, We most lovingly impart the Apostolic Blessing from the depths of Our heart, to you, venerable brothers, and to all the clergy and faithful laity entrusted to your care.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, May 17, 1852, in the sixth year of Our Pontificate.