



Apostolicae Nostrae Caritatis

Encyclical Of Pope Pius IX

Urging Prayers For Peace

August 1, 1854

To the Venerable Brothers, the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries Who Share Grace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

When We contemplate the whole Catholic world with the care and affection of Our apostolic love, We can hardly put into words how deeply saddened We are at seeing Christian and civil society disturbed and thoroughly confused, oppressed and torn apart by all kinds of disasters. Moreover you know very well how the Christian people are afflicted and harassed by ferocious wars, internal discords, plagues, earthquakes, and other serious troubles. In addition, it is lamentable that among so many injuries and evils perpetrated by the sons of darkness, who are more artful than the sons of light, they try energetically to wage a bitter war against the Catholic Church and its doctrines. In this they use diabolic deceits, arts, and labors. They attempt to overthrow the authority of the Church's legitimate power and to corrupt the minds and souls of everyone. They want to spread everywhere the deadly virus of indifferentism and unbelief; to mix together all human and divine rights; to promote dissension, discord, and movements of impious rebellion; and to commit vicious deeds and cruel crimes. They leave nothing untried so that if it were possible, Our religion would be uprooted and human society itself might be destroyed.

2. Well aware of these dangerous circumstances, We have not failed to raise Our eyes to the holy mountain whence We trust every future help will come. We asked to obtain all the good things which We lack and to avoid the evils We dread. We do not cease to beseech Our merciful God with fervent prayers so that, banishing war to the ends of the earth and removing all disagreements from the Christian princes, He might grant peace and tranquility to their people. May God especially grant to those princes a pious zeal by preserving and spreading the Catholic faith and doctrine. The happiness of the people depends upon this. May He also save those leaders and people from all the evils which afflict them and make them

rejoice in true prosperity. May He bestow the gift of His grace on those who stray so that they may return from the path of perdition to the way of truth and justice and may be turned toward God with a sincere heart. Moreover We have ordered that prayer imploring the divine mercy be offered in this Our beloved city. Following in the footsteps of Our predecessors, We decided to have recourse to your prayers and to those of the whole Church.

3. Therefore, We are writing this letter to you. We implore you to arouse the faithful entrusted to your care concerning the matters mentioned above so that they might strive to appease the wrath of God provoked by the shameful deeds of men. They should do this by true penance with prayers, fasting, almsgiving, and other good works. Also explain to the faithful how God is merciful to all who call upon Him and how powerful prayer is if We go to the Lord without permitting any enemy of our salvation to have access to us. To use the words of Chrysostom, prayer is "the source, the root, and the mother of innumerable good things. The power of prayer extinguishes the strength of fire, restrains the raging of lions, settles wars and fights, endures storms, escapes devils, opens the doors of heaven, breaks the bonds of death, casts out diseases, repels injuries, and strengthens shattered cities. Prayer endures the blows inflicted from heaven, all the snares of men, and every evil."[1]

4. We strongly desire that when you pray to the Father of Mercies about these matters you do not forget to pray to Him humbly, ardently, and zealously, following the guidelines of Our encyclical letter dated February 2, 1849. Pray that He will desire to enlighten Our mind with the light of His Holy Spirit by which We might issue a decree as soon as possible concerning the conception of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Immaculate Virgin Mary. This would result in the greater glory of God and the praise of that Virgin, the loving mother of us all.

5. Indeed We have decided to offer the treasures of divine gifts, whose dispensation the Most High entrusted to Our care, so that your faithful may pray with more fervent love and more abundant fruit. For this reason, by the mercy of almighty God and trusting in the authority of His blessed apostles Peter and Paul, We confer, by the power of binding and loosing which the Lord gave to Us, a plenary indulgence of all sins as in a jubilee. This indulgence will be granted to all the faithful of your dioceses who accomplish the following acts within a three month span to be determined by each one of you and computed from the day which you decide upon. They must have humbly confessed their sins with sincere regret for them, and after being purified with sacramental absolution, they must have reverently received the sacrament of the Eucharist. They must also visit three churches designated by you or one of the churches three times and must say prayers there for the exaltation and prosperity of Holy Mother Church and the Apostolic See, for the elimination of heresies, for the peace and harmony of the Christian princes, and for the tranquillity and unity of the whole Christian people. Moreover they should fast once within the same period and give some alms to the poor. This indulgence can also be applied to the souls in purgatory. Since We

desire even cloistered nuns and other people permanently in cloister to participate in this indulgence, as well as people in prisons, invalids, and other people prevented by any handicap from carrying out some of the aforementioned works, We grant the confessors the ability to exchange one work of piety for another or to defer it to another time. In addition, the confessors will have the power to give communion to children who have not yet had their first communion. Therefore, We authorize you on this occasion and during this three month period to bestow on the confessors of your dioceses all those same powers which We gave in the other jubilee announced through Our encyclical letter of November 21, 1851. We published that letter which begins with "Ex aliis nostris" and sent it to you. All those things which We excepted in that letter must be observed. In addition, We also grant you the favor of giving the faithful -- both laymen and clerics -- the ability on this occasion to choose their own confessors, either secular or regular, from those approved. We also grant this same power to the cloistered nuns exempt from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary and to other women living in cloister.

6. Set to work then, venerable brothers, since you have been called to share in Our cares and have been placed as guardians over the walls of Jerusalem. Do not cease night and day to cry to the Lord Our God with Us. Implore His divine mercy so that He may turn away the scourge of His wrath, which we deserve for our sins and may mercifully bestow the riches of His goodness on everyone. We do not doubt that you will be totally content with these wishes and requests. And We know for certain that everyone, especially the clergy, the men and women in religious orders, and the faithful laity who worthily walk in the vocation to which they were called, will send prayers and supplications unceasingly to God. Nor would We neglect to ask the help of those who have obtained the palm of victory so that God might more easily bend His ear to Our prayers. Above all, We constantly call upon the Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, who is the most suitable and most powerful intercessor with God and who is the mother of graces and mercies. Then We invoke the patronage of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul and of all the saints who reign with Christ in heaven. Nothing should be more important, nothing more preferable to you than to exhort the faithful entrusted to your care so that they, daily more firm and immovable, may persist in the profession of the Catholic faith; avoid the snares, lies, and deceptions of their enemies; advance more quickly in the ways of God's commandments; and carefully abstain from sin. From sin comes all the evils of the human race. For this reason never cease to inflame the zeal of the parish priests so that in discharging their office diligently, they may never stop instructing the Christian people entrusted to them in the principles and teachings of our faith, nourishing them through the administration of the sacraments, and exhorting them in sound doctrine.

7. Finally, as a sign of all heavenly gifts and as a witness of Our ardent love for you, receive the apostolic benediction which We affectionately impart to you and to all the clergy and laity entrusted to your care.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's on the first day of August in the year 1854, the ninth

year of Our Pontificate.

Endnotes

1. St. John Chrysostom, homily 15 on the incomprehensible nature of God against the Anomaei.