



Beneficia Dei

Encyclical Of Pope Pius IX On The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Of His Pontificate

June 4, 1871

To all Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries in Loving Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brothers, We give you Greeting and Our Apostolic Blessing.

The favors of God summon Us to celebrate His kindness, especially since He continues to protect Us. For We are now in the 25th year of our papacy. You know well the painful crises We have endured. Truly it is clear, from the succession of so many events, that the Church militant in its many struggles and victories is prevailing; truly God governs change and rules over the world which is His footstool; truly He often makes use of weak and despicable instruments to accomplish the designs of His wisdom.

Accomplishments of the Papacy

2. Jesus Christ has strengthened and guided Our weakness and inadequacy through Our long papacy. So, relying on His divine aid and continually benefitting from the advice of the cardinals, and often from your advice also, venerable brothers, when many of you came to Rome adorning this See of truth with the brightness of your virtue and united piety. We have been able in the course of this Pontificate to declare and define as a dogma the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God in fulfillment of the desires of the Catholic world and Ourselves. We have also decreed heavenly honors for the many courageous men and women of our religion. We do not doubt that they and the Mother of God will help the Catholic Church in these most unfavorable times. Because of God's help, We were able also, by sending evangelical laborers, to spread Catholicism to widely separated and even unfriendly districts, to establish the order of ecclesiastical hierarchy in many places, and to condemn the errors of our age opposed to human reason and good morals. Likewise with God's help, We made an alliance between the ecclesiastical and the civil power both in the regions of Europe and America. We also cared for the many needs of the eastern church, which from the start of Our Apostolic ministry We have always regarded with fatherly love. Not very long ago We undertook and promoted the work of the

ecumenical Vatican Council. But because of the infamous turn in events, We had to suspend it after some great results had been achieved, but while others were awaited by the Church.

Usurpation of the City

3. And, venerable brothers, We have never neglected what the right and duty of Our civil rule demanded. The congratulations and applause which greeted the beginning of Our pontificate, quickly changed into insults and attacks so great that We were forced into exile from this Our beloved city. But when We returned to the See with the support of Catholic peoples and rulers, We immediately toiled to achieve real prosperity, free from deceit for Our faithful subjects. We have always recognized this as the most serious duty of Our civil rule. But the greed of the neighboring ruler coveted the regions of Our temporal realm, and he obstinately preferred the advice of the sects of perdition to Our repeated warning and summonses. Most recently, he has far outdone the shamelessness even of the Prodigal Son. He has stormed Our city by force and now even controls it. We are, of course, greatly upset at this lawless usurpation of which We are the victim. We are utterly pained at the great wickedness of the plan to destroy Our civil rule, which at the same time would destroy Our spiritual power and the kingdom of Christ on earth. We are pained at the sight of so many serious evils, especially of those which jeopardize the eternal salvation of Our people. In this bitterness, nothing is more saddening for Us than to be prevented by the state of Our defeated liberty from applying the necessary remedies to so many evils.

Problems of the French

4. To these reasons for Our sorrow, We must add the long and pitiful succession of disasters and evils which have for so long smitten the illustrious French nation. These evils have recently increased enormously through the quite unheard-of excesses of beastly, God-forsaken scum. In particular, We are horrified and tormented by the murder of the Archbishop of Paris which has filled the whole world with fear and horror. Finally, another bitterness greater than the rest afflicts Us when We see so many sons in revolt, burdened by so many serious censures. They pay no heed to Our fatherly voice nor to their own salvation, but continue to despise the time which God still offers them for penitence; instead, they prefer to deride the anger of divine punishment rather than to experience the fruit of mercy in good season.

Praise for God

5. And now in the midst of such changes, We see that by the most kind protection of God, the anniversary of Our elevation has arrived. We succeeded to the See of blessed Peter, and now in length of years of Apostolic service We equal him, although We are far from equal to him in merit. This is truly a new, unique, and mighty gift of God's condescension, conferred only on Us in the whole line of Our

holy predecessors throughout nineteen centuries. On this occasion, We recognize the even more wonderful kindness of God toward Us, when We see that He has deemed Us worthy to suffer persecution for the sake of justice, and when We see the marvelous feelings of devotion and love which strongly move the Christian people the world over, uniting them to this Holy See. Indeed, since He conferred these gifts on Us despite Our great unworthiness, We are unable to return thanks in a fitting manner.

6. Therefore, while We ask the Mother of God to teach Us to glorify God as she did with those sublime words, "He Who is Mighty has done great things for me," We urgently beseech you and your flocks to join with us in singing canticles and hymns of praise and thanks to God. Magnify the Lord with me, We say in the words of St. Leo the Great, and let us exalt His name to one another; then We may praise God who is the source of all the graces and mercies We have received. Let your people know, however, Our deep gratitude for their remarkable testimonies and services which they have given with such constancy for so long. As regards Ourselves, since We may claim with justice the words uttered by the Royal Prophet, "my habitation has been prolonged," We still need the help of your prayers to enable Us with strength and confidence to return Our soul to the Prince of Shepherds. In His bosom there is refreshment from the evils of this troubled and painful life and a blessed haven of eternal calm and peace.

7. However, in order that the gifts conferred on Our pontificate by God's generosity may be to His greater glory, on this occasion We empower each of you, by Our Apostolic authority, to give the Papal Blessing with the addition of a plenary indulgence in the usual form of the Church, on the 16th or 21st of this month or on another day of your choice. We desire to look after the spiritual benefit of the faithful. Consequently, We grant that all Christ's faithful who receive the sacraments of Penance and holy Communion and offer pious prayers for the harmony of Christian rulers, for the complete destruction of heresies, and for the exaltation of Our Holy Mother the Church, can obtain a plenary indulgence for all their sins. The faithful can obtain the indulgence in any place in each of your dioceses on any day you choose. In dioceses where the cathedral see is vacant, the Vicars Capitular at the time can choose the day. We have no doubt that this opportunity will effectively arouse the Christian people to prayer, and that when prayers have been thus increased, We will receive the mercy which the present ills compel Us to pray for wholeheartedly.

8. Meanwhile, venerable brothers, We request for you from Almighty God constancy, heavenly hope, and all consolation. We wish the Apostolic blessing, which with the full abundance of Our love We impart to you, your faithful, and clergy to be an augury of those gifts and a witness of Our special benevolence.

Given at Rome in St. Peter's on the fourth of June, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, in the year 1871 in the 25th year of Our Pontificate.