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ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON CATHOLICISMIN THE UNITED STATES

To the Archbishops and Bishops of the United States.

We traverse in spirit and thought the wide expanse of ocean; and although We have at other times addressed you in writing - chiefly when We directed Encyclical Letters to the bishops of the Catholic world-yet have We now resolved to speak to you separately, trusting that We shall be, God willing, of some assistance to the Catholic cause amongst you. To this We apply Ourselves with the utmost zeal and care; because We highly esteem and love exceedingly the young and vigorous American nation, in which We plainly discern latent forces for the advancement alike of civilization and of Christianity.

2. Not long ago, when your whole nation, as was fitting, celebrated, with grateful recollection and every manifestation of joy, the completion of the fourth century since the discovery of America, We, too, commemorated together with you that most auspicious event, sharing in your rejoicings with equal good-will. Nor were We on that occasion content with offering prayers at a distance for your welfare and greatness. It was Our wish to be in some manner present with you in your festivities. Hence We cheerfully sent one who should represent Our person. Not without good reason did We take part in your celebration. For when America was, as yet, but a new-born babe, uttering in its cradle its first feeble cries, the Church took it to her bosom and motherly embrace. Columbus, as We have elsewhere expressly shown, sought, as the primary fruit of his voyages and labors, to open a pathway for the Christian faith into new lands and new seas. Keeping this thought constantly in view, his first solicitude, wherever he disembarked, was to plant upon the shore the sacred emblem of the cross. Wherefore, like as the Ark of Noe, surmounting the overflowing waters, bore the seed of Israel together with the remnants of the human race, even thus did the barks launched by Columbus upon the ocean carry into regions beyond the seas as well the germs of mighty States as the principles of the Catholic religion.

3. This is not the place to give a detailed account of what thereupon ensued. Very

rapidly did the light of the Gospel shine upon the savage tribes discovered by the Ligurian. For it is sufficiently well known how many of the children of Francis, as well as of Dominic and of Loyola, were accustomed during the two following centuries to voyage thither for this purpose; how they cared for the colonies brought over from Europe; but primarily and chiefly how they converted the natives from superstition to Christianity, sealing their labors in many instances with the testimony of their blood. The names newly given to so many of your towns and rivers and mountains and lakes teach and clearly witness how deeply your beginnings were marked with the footprints of the Catholic Church.

4. Nor, perchance did the fact which We now recall take place without some design of divine Providence. Precisely at the epoch when the American colonies, having, with Catholic aid, achieved liberty and independence, coalesced into a constitutional Republic the ecclesiastical hierarchy was happily established amongst you; and at the very time when the popular suffrage placed the great Washington at the helm of the Republic, the first bishop was set by apostolic authority over the American Church. The well-known friendship and familiar intercourse which subsisted between these two men seems to be an evidence that the United States ought to be conjoined in concord and amity with the Catholic Church. And not without cause; for without morality the State cannot endure-a truth which that illustrious citizen of yours, whom We have just mentioned, with a keenness of insight worthy of his genius and statesmanship perceived and proclaimed. But the best and strongest support of morality is religion. She, by her very nature, guards and defends all the principles on which duties are founded, and setting before us the motives most powerful to influence us, commands us to live virtuously and forbids us to transgress. Now what is the Church other than a legitimate society, founded by the will and ordinance of Jesus Christ for the preservation of morality and the defence of religion? For this reason have We repeatedly endeavored, from the summit of the pontifical dignity, to inculcate that the Church, whilst directly and immediately aiming at the salvation of souls and the beatitude which is to be attained in heaven, is yet, even in the order of temporal things, the fountain of blessings so numerous and great that they could not have been greater or more numerous had the original purpose of her institution been the pursuit of happiness during the life which is spent on earth.

5. That your Republic is .progressing and developing by giant strides is patent to all; and this holds good in religious matters also. For even as your cities, in the course of one century, have made a marvellous increase in wealth and power, so do we behold the Church, from scant and slender beginnings, grown with rapidity to be great and exceedingly flourishing. Now if, on the one hand, the increased riches and resources of your cities are justly attributed to the talents and active industry of the American people, on the other hand, the prosperous condition of Catholicity must be ascribed, first indeed, to the virtue, the ability, and the prudence of the bishops and clergy; but in so slight measure also, to the faith and generosity of the Catholic laity. Thus, while the different classes exerted their best energies, you were enabled to erect unnumbered religious and useful institutions, sacred edifices, schools for the instruction of youth, colleges for the higher branches, homes for the poor, hospitals for the sick, and convents and

monasteries. As for what more closely touches spiritual interests, which are based upon the exercise of Christian virtues, many facts have been brought to Our notice, whereby We are animated with hope and filled with joy, namely, that the numbers of the secular and regular clergy are steadily augmenting, that pious sodalities and confraternities are held in esteem, that the Catholic parochial schools, the Sunday-schools for imparting Christian doctrine, and summer schools are in a flourishing condition; moreover, associations for mutual aid, for the relief of the indigent, for the promotion of temperate living, add to all this the many evidences of popular piety.

6. The main factor, no doubt, in bringing things into this happy state were the ordinances and decrees of your synods, especially of those which in more recent times were convened and confirmed by the authority of the Apostolic See. But, moreover (a fact which it gives pleasure to acknowledge), thanks are due to the equity of the laws which obtain in America and to the customs of the well-ordered Republic. For the Church amongst you, unopposed by the Constitution and government of your nation, fettered by no hostile legislation, protected against violence by the common laws and the impartiality of the tribunals, is free to live and act without hindrance. Yet, though all this is true, it would be very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the type of the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for State and Church to be, as in America, dissevered and divorced. The fact that Catholicity with you is in good condition, nay, is even enjoying a prosperous growth, is by all means to be attributed to the fecundity with which God has endowed His Church, in virtue of which unless men or circumstances interfere, she spontaneously expands and propagates herself; but she would bring forth more abundant fruits if, in addition to liberty, she enjoyed the favor of the laws and the patronage of the public authority.

7. For Our part We have left nothing undone, as far as circumstances permitted, to preserve and more solidly establish amongst you the Catholic religion. With this intent, We have, as you are well aware, turned Our attention to two special objects: first, the advancement of learning; second, a perfecting of methods in the management of Church affairs. There already, indeed, existed several distinguished universities. We, however, thought it advisable that there should be one founded by authority of the Apostolic See and endowed by Us with all suitable powers, in which Catholic professors might instruct those devoted to the pursuit of learning. The design was to begin with philosophy and theology, adding, as means and circumstances would allow, the remaining branches, those particularly which the present age has introduced or perfected. An education cannot be deemed complete which takes no notice of modern sciences. It is obvious that in the existing keen competition of talents, and the widespread and, in itself, noble and praiseworthy passion for knowledge, Catholics ought to be not followers but leaders. It is necessary, therefore, that they should cultivate every refinement of learning, and zealously train their minds to the discovery of truth and the investigation, so far as it is possible, of the entire domain of nature. This in every age has been the desire of the Church; upon the enlargement of the boundaries of the sciences has she been wont to bestow all possible labor and energy. By a

letter, therefore, dated the seventh day of March, in the year of Our Lord 1889, directed to you, Venerable Brethren, We established at Washington, your capital city, esteemed by a majority of you a very proper seat for the higher studies, a university for the instruction of young men desirous of pursuing advanced courses. In announcing this matter to Our Venerable Brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, in Consistory, We expressed the wish that it should be regarded as the fixed law of the university to unite erudition and learning with soundness of faith and to imbue its students not less with religion than with scientific culture. To the Bishops of the United States We entrusted the task of establishing a suitable course of studies and of supervising the discipline of the students; and We conferred the office and authority of Chancellor, as it is called, upon the Archbishop of Baltimore. And, by divine favor, a quite happy beginning was made. For, without any delay, whilst you were celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of your ecclesiastical hierarchy, under the brightest auspices, in the presence of Our delegate, the divinity classes were opened. From that time onward We know that theological science has been imparted by the diligence of eminent men the renown of whose talents and learning receives a fitting crown in their recognized loyalty and devotion to the Apostolic See. Nor is it long since We were apprised that, thanks to the liberality of a pious priest, a new building had been constructed, in which young men, as well cleric as lay, are to receive instruction in the natural sciences and in literature. From Our knowledge of the American character, We are fully confident that the example set by this noble man will incite others of your citizens to imitate him; they will not fail to realize that liberality exercised towards such an object will be repaid by the very greatest advantages to the public.

8. No one can be ignorant how powerfully similar institutions of learning, whether originally founded by the Roman Church herself from time to time or approved and promoted by her legislation, have contributed to the spread of knowledge and civilization in every part of Europe. Even in Our own day, though other instances might be given, it is enough to mention the University of Louvain, to which the entire Belgian nation ascribes its almost daily increase in prosperity and glory. Equally abundant will be the benefits proceeding from the Washington University, if the professors and students (as We doubt not they will) be mindful of Our injunctions, and, shunning party spirit and strife, conciliate the good opinion of the people and the clergy.

9. We wish now, Venerable Brethren, to commend to your affection and to the generosity of your people the college which Our predecessor, Pius IX, founded in this city for the ecclesiastical training of young men from North America, and which We took care to place upon a firm basis by a letter dated the twenty-fifth day of October, in the year of Our Lord 1884. We can make this appeal the more confidently, because the results obtained from this institution have by no means belied the expectations commonly entertained regarding it. You yourselves can testify that during its brief existence it has sent forth a very large number of exemplary priests, some of whom have been promoted for their virtue and learning to the highest degrees of ecclesiastical dignity. We are, therefore, thoroughly persuaded that you will continue to be solicitous to send hither select young men

who are in training to become the hope of the Church. For they will carry back to their homes and utilize for the general good the wealth of intellectual attainments and moral excellence which they shall have acquired in the city of Rome.
10. The love which We cherish towards the Catholics of your nation moved Us, likewise, to turn Our attention at the very beginning of Our Pontificate to the convocation of a third Plenary Council of Baltimore. Subsequently, when the archbishops, at Our invitation, had come to Rome, We diligently inquired from them what they deemed most conducive to the common good. We finally, and after mature deliberation, ratified by apostolic authority the decrees of the prelates assembled at Baltimore. In truth the event has proven, and still proves, that the decrees of Baltimore were salutary and timely in the extreme. Experience has demonstrated their power for the maintenance of discipline; for stimulating the intelligence and zeal of the clergy; for defending and developing the Catholic education of youth. Wherefore, Venerable Brethren, if We make acknowledgement of your activity in these matters, if We laud your firmness tempered with prudence, We but pay tribute due to your merit; for We are fully sensible that so great a harvest of blessings could by no means have so swiftly ripened to maturity, had you not exerted yourselves, each to the utmost of his ability, sedulously and faithfully to carry into effect the statutes you had wisely framed at Baltimore.
11. But when the Council of Baltimore had concluded its labors, the duty still remained of putting, so to speak, a proper and becoming crown upon the work. This, We perceived, could scarcely be done in a more fitting manner than through the due establishment by the Apostolic See of an American Legation. Accordingly, as you are well aware, We have done this. By this action, as We have elsewhere intimated, We have wished, first of all, to certify that, in Our judgment and affection, America occupies the same place and rights as other States, be they ever so mighty and imperial. In addition to this We had in mind to draw more closely the bonds of duty and friendship which connect you and so many thousands of Catholics with the Apostolic See. In fact, the mass of the Catholics understood how salutary Our action was destined to be; they saw, moreover, that it accorded with the usage and policy of the Apostolic See. For it has been, from earliest antiquity, the custom of the Roman Pontiffs in the exercise of the divinely bestowed gift of the primacy in the administration of the Church of Christ to send forth legates to Christian nations and peoples. And they did this, not by an adventitious but an inherent right. For "the Roman Pontiff, upon whom Christ has conferred ordinary and immediate jurisdiction, as well over all and singular churches, as over all and singular pastors and faithful,(1) since he cannot personally visit the different regions and thus exercise the pastoral office over the flock entrusted to him, finds it necessary from time to time, in the discharge of the ministry imposed on him, to despatch legates into different parts of the world, according as the need arises; who, supplying his place, may correct errors, make the rough ways plain, and administer to the people confided to their care increased means of salvation."(2)
12. But how unjust and baseless would be the suspicion, should it anywhere exist, that the powers conferred on the legate are an obstacle to the authority of the bishops! Sacred to Us (more than to any other) are the rights of those "whom the

Holy Ghost has placed as bishops to rule the Church of God." That these rights should remain intact in every nation in every part of the globe, We both desire and ought to desire, the more so since the dignity of the individual bishop is by nature so interwoven with the dignity of the Roman Pontiff that any measure which benefits the one necessarily protects the other. "My honor is the honor of the Universal Church. My honor is the unimpaired vigor of My brethren. Then am I truly honored when to each one due honor is not denied."(3) Therefore, since it is the office and function of an apostolic legate, with whatsoever powers he may be vested, to execute the mandates and interpret the will of the Pontiff who sends him, thus, so far from his being of any detriment to the ordinary power of the bishops, he will rather bring an accession of stability and strength. His authority will possess no slight weight for preserving in the multitude a submissive spirit; in the clergy discipline and due reverence for the bishops, and in the bishops mutual charity and an intimate union of souls. And since this union, so salutary and desirable, consists mainly in harmony of thought and action, he will, no doubt, bring it to pass that each one of you shall persevere in the diligent administration of his diocesan affairs; that one shall not impede another in matters of government; that one shall not pry into the counsels and conduct of another; finally, that with disagreements eradicated and mutual esteem maintained, you may all work together with combined energies to promote the glory of the American Church and the general welfare. It is difficult to estimate the good results which will flow from this concord of the bishops. Our own people will receive edification; and the force of example will have its effect on those without who will be persuaded by this argument alone that the divine apostolate has passed by inheritance to the ranks of the Catholic episcopate.

13. Another consideration claims our earnest attention. All intelligent men are agreed, and We Ourselves have with pleasure intimated it above, that America seems destined for greater things. Now, it is Our wish that the Catholic Church should not only share in, but help to bring about, this prospective greatness. We deem it right and proper that she should, by availing herself of the opportunities daily presented to her, keep equal step with the Republic in the march of improvement, at the same time striving to the utmost, by her virtue and her institutions, to aid in the rapid growth of the States. Now, she will attain both these objects the more easily and abundantly, in proportion to the degree in which the future shall find her constitution perfected. But what is the meaning of the legation of which we are speaking, or what is its ultimate aim except to bring it about that the constitution of the Church shall be strengthened, her discipline better fortified? Wherefore, We ardently desire that this truth should sink day by day more deeply into the minds of Catholics-namely, that they can in no better way safeguard their own individual interests and the common good than by yielding a hearty submission and obedience to the Church. Your faithful people, however, are scarcely in need of exhortation on this point; for they are accustomed to adhere to the institutions of Catholicity with willing souls and a constancy worthy of all praise.

14. To one matter of the first importance and fraught with the greatest blessings it is a pleasure at this place to refer, on account of the holy firmness in principle and

practice respecting it which, as a rule, rightly prevails amongst you; We mean the Christian dogma of the unity and indissolubility of marriage; which supplies the firmest bond of safety not merely to the family but to society at large. Not a few of your citizens, even of those who dissent from us in other doctrines, terrified by the licentiousness of divorce, admire and approve in this regard the Catholic teaching and the Catholic customs. They are led to this judgment not less by love of country than by the wisdom of the doctrine. For difficult it is to imagine a more deadly pest to the community than the wish to declare dissoluble a bond which the law of God has made perpetual and inseverable. Divorce "is the fruitful cause of mutable marriage contracts; it diminishes mutual affection; it supplies a pernicious stimulus to unfaithfulness; it is injurious to the care and education of children; it gives occasion to the breaking up of domestic society; it scatters the seeds of discord among families; it lessens and degrades the dignity of women, who incur the danger of being abandoned when they shall have subserved the lust of their husbands. And since nothing tends so effectually as the corruption of morals to ruin families and undermine the strength of kingdoms, it may easily be perceived that divorce is especially hostile to the prosperity of families and States."(4)

15. As regards civil affairs, experience has shown how important it is that the citizens should be upright and virtuous. In a free State, unless justice be generally cultivated, unless the people be repeatedly and diligently urged to observe the precepts and laws of the Gospel, liberty itself may be pernicious. Let those of the clergy, therefore, who are occupied with the instruction of the multitude, treat plainly this topic of the duties of citizens, so that all may understand and feel the necessity, in political life, of conscientiousness, self restraint, and integrity; for that cannot be lawful in public which is unlawful in private affairs. On this whole subject there are to be found, as you know, in the encyclical letters written by Us from time to time in the course of Our pontificate, many things which Catholics should attend to and observe. In these writings and expositions We have treated of human liberty, of the chief Christian duties, of civil government, and of the Christian constitution of States, drawing Our principles as well from the teaching of the Gospels as from reason. They, then, who wish to be good citizens and discharge their duties faithfully may readily learn from Our Letters the ideal of an upright life. In like manner, let the priests be persistent in keeping before the minds of the people the enactments of the Third Council of Baltimore, particularly those which inculcate the virtue of temperance, the frequent use of the sacraments and the observance of the just laws and institutions of the Republic.

16. Now, with regard to entering societies, extreme care should be taken not to be ensnared by error. And We wish to be understood as referring in a special manner to the working classes, who assuredly have the right to unite in associations for the promotion of their interests; a right acknowledged by the Church and unopposed by nature. But it is very important to take heed with whom they are to associate, lest whilst seeking aid for the improvement of their condition they may be imperilling far weightier interests. The most effectual precaution against this peril is to determine with themselves at no time or in any matter to be parties to the violation of justice. Any society, therefore, which is ruled by and servilely obeys persons who are not steadfast for the right and friendly to religion is capable of

being extremely prejudicial to the interests as well of individuals as of the community; beneficial it cannot be. Let this conclusion, therefore, remain firm-to shun not only those associations which have been openly condemned by the judgment of the Church, but those also which, in the opinion of intelligent men, and especially of the bishops, are regarded as suspicious and dangerous.
17. Nay, rather, unless forced by necessity to do otherwise, Catholics ought to prefer to associate with Catholics, a course which will be very conducive to the safeguarding of their faith. As presidents of societies thus formed among themselves, it will be well to appoint either priests or upright laymen of weight and character, guided by whose counsels they should endeavor peacefully to adopt and carry into effect such measures as may seem most advantageous to their interests, keeping in view the rules laid down by Us in Our Encyclical, Rerum Novarum. Let them, however, never allow this to escape their memory: that whilst it is proper and desirable to assert and secure the rights of the many, yet this is not to be done by a violation of duty; and that these are very important duties; not to touch what belongs to another; to allow every one to be free in the management of his own affairs; not to hinder any one to dispose of his services when he please and where he please. The scenes of violence and riot which you witnessed last year in your own country sufficiently admonish you that America too is threatened with the audacity and ferocity of the enemies of public order. The state of the times, therefore, bids Catholics to labor for the tranquillity of the commonwealth, and for this purpose to obey the laws, abhor violence, and seek no more than equity or justice permits.
18. Towards these objects much may be contributed by those who have devoted themselves to writing, and in particular by those who are engaged on the daily press. We are aware that already there labor in this field many men of skill and experience, whose diligence demands words of praise rather than of encouragement. Nevertheless, since the thirst for reading and knowledge is so vehement and widespread amongst you, and since, according to circumstances, it can be productive either of good or evil, every effort should be made to increase the number of intelligent and well-disposed writers who take religion for their guide and virtue for their constant companion. And this seems all the more necessary in America, on account of the familiar intercourse and intimacy between Catholics and those who are estranged from the Catholic name, a condition of things which certainly exacts from our people great circumspection and more than ordinary firmness. It is necessary to instruct, admonish, strengthen and urge them on to the pursuit of virtue and to the faithful observance, amid so many occasions of stumbling, of their duties towards the Church. It is, of course, the proper function of the clergy to devote their care and energies to this great work; but the age and the country require that journalists should be equally zealous in this same cause and labor in it to the full extent of their powers. Let them, however, seriously reflect that their writings, if not positively prejudicial to religion, will surely be of slight service to it unless in concord of minds they all seek the same end. They who desire to be of real service to the Church, and with their pens heartily to defend the Catholic cause, should carry on the conflict with perfect unanimity, and, as it were, with serried ranks, for they rather inflict than repel war if they waste their

strength by discord. In like manner their work, instead of being profitable and fruitful, becomes injurious and disastrous whenever they presume to call before their tribunal the decisions and acts of bishops, and, casting off due reverence, cavil and find fault; not perceiving how great a disturbance of order, how many evils are thereby produced. Let them, then, be mindful of their duty, and not overstep the proper limits of moderation. The bishops, placed in the lofty position of authority, are to be obeyed, and suitable honor befitting the magnitude and sanctity of their office should be paid them. Now, this reverence, "which it is lawful to no one to neglect," should of necessity be eminently conspicuous and exemplary in Catholic journalists. For journals, naturally circulating far and wide, come daily into the hands of everybody, and exert no small influence upon the opinions and morals of the multitude.(5)

19. We have Ourselves, on frequent occasions, laid down many rules respecting the duties of a good writer; many of which were unanimously inculcated as well by the Third Council of Baltimore as by the archbishops in their meeting at Chicago in the year 1893. Let Catholic writers, therefore, bear impressed on their minds Our teachings on this point as well as yours; and let them resolve that their entire method of writing shall be thereby guided, if they indeed desire, as they ought to desire, to discharge their duty well.

20. Our thoughts now turn to those who dissent from us in matters of Christian faith; and who shall deny that, with not a few of them, dissent is a matter rather of inheritance than of will? How solicitous We are of their salvation, with what ardor of soul We wish that they should be at length restored to the embrace of the Church, the common mother of all, Our Apostolic Epistle, "Praeclara," has in very recent times declared. Nor are we destitute of all hope; for He is present and bath a care whom all things obey and who laid down His life that He might "gather in one the children of God who were dispersed." (John xi. 52).

21. Surely we ought not to desert them nor leave them to their fancies; but with mildness and charity draw them to us, using every means of persuasion to induce them to examine closely every part of the Catholic doctrine, and to free themselves from preconceived notions. In this matter, if the first place belongs to the bishops and clergy, the second belongs to the laity, who have it in their power to aid the apostolic efforts of the clergy by the probity of their morals and the integrity of their lives. Great is the force of example; particularly with those who are earnestly seeking the truth, and who, from a certain inborn virtuous disposition, are striving to live an honorable and upright life, to which class very many of your fellow-citizens belong. If the spectacle of Christian virtues exerted the powerful influence over the heathens blinded, as they were, by inveterate superstition, which the records of history attest, shall we think it powerless to eradicate error in the case of those who have been initiated into the Christian religion?

22. Finally, We cannot pass over in silence those whose long-continued unhappy lot implores and demands succor from men of apostolic zeal; We refer to the Indians and the negroes who are to be found within the confines of America, the greatest portion of whom have not yet dispelled the darkness of superstition. How wide a field for cultivation! How great a multitude of human beings to be made

partakers of the blessing derived through Jesus Christ!
23. Meanwhile, as a presage of heavenly graces and a testimony of Our benevolence, We most lovingly in the Lord impart to you, Venerable Brethren, and to your clergy and people, Our Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the feast of the Epiphany, the sixth day of January, 1895, in the seventeenth year of Our Pontificate.

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2. Cap. Un. Extrav. Comm. De Consuet, 1. 1.
3. S. Gregorius Epis. ad Eulog. Alex. lib.viii. ep. 30.
4. Encyc. Arcanum.
5. Ep. Cognita Nobis ad Archiepp, et Epp.Provinciarum, Taurinen. Mediolanen. et Vercellen, xxv., Jan. an, MDCCCLXXXII.