



Inter Multiplices

Encyclical Of Pope Pius IX

Pleading For Unity Of Spirit

March 21, 1853

To Our Beloved Sons Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and Venerable Brothers Archbishops and Bishops of France.

Beloved Sons of Ours and Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

Among the many anxieties arising from Our concern for all the churches given to Us, though unworthy, by the hidden deliberation of divine Providence, far too many are the people about whom the Apostle foretold, "There will come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine; having itching ears, they will heap up to themselves teachers to suit their own likings. But the wicked and impostors will go from bad to worse, erring and leading into error." [1] We are thus overjoyed when We turn to that renowned nation of France, a nation of many famous men and worthy of merit from Us. In that nation We are consoled to see how with God's help the Catholic religion and its salutary doctrines flourish, flower, and prevail more every day. We are consoled by the care and zeal with which you fulfill your ministry and care for the safety and salvation of your beloved flock. And Our consolation increases as We learn more and more from the letters you write to Us: more, that is, about the filial piety, love, and reverence with which you glory to follow Us and this Chair of Peter. This chair is the center of Catholic truth and unity, that is, the head, mother, and teacher of all the Churches [2] to which all honor and obedience must be offered. [3] Every church must agree with it because of its greater preeminence -- that is, those people who are in all respects faithful. [4]

2. We are also joyful because We know that you, aware of the seriousness of your episcopal duties, labor to increase the glory of God and to defend the cause of His Holy Church. You also use all your pastoral care and vigilance to see that the ecclesiastics of your dioceses set forth each day more worthy of the vocation to which they are called and that they give example of all the virtues to the Christian people, performing the offices of their ministry diligently. We rejoice in your concern that the faithful entrusted to you are daily nourished with the words of

faith, confirmed by the gifts of grace, grow in the knowledge of God, and walk the road that leads to life. Finally, we rejoice in your concern for those who stray from the truth, that they may return to the paths of salvation. Hence We joyfully recognize how eagerly you strive to obey Our desires and admonitions to celebrate provincial synods. This means that in your dioceses the inheritance of faith is maintained whole and inviolate; pure doctrine is taught; the honor of divine worship increased; the training and discipline of the clergy strengthened; and good character, virtue, religion, and piety are aroused and everywhere confirmed with auspicious and happy progress. And We rejoice very much when We see that by your special zeal the liturgy of the Roman Church has been restored according to Our desires in many of your dioceses, where thus far particular circumstances least resisted. And We are so much the more pleased since We know that in many dioceses of France, because of the condition of the times, even those things were hardly observed which Our predecessor St. Pius V wisely and providently ordained in his Apostolic Letter of July 9, 1568 (*Quod a nobis postulat*).

3. We rejoice to recall all these things with praise for your distinguished order, beloved sons and venerable brothers; nevertheless We cannot hide the grave sadness and grief which afflicts Us now, when We learn what dissensions the ancient enemy strives to excite among you in order to weaken your concord of minds. Therefore, because of Our Apostolic duty and the great love which We cherish for you and those faithful people, We write this letter in which We address you with the intimate affection of Our heart. At the same time We admonish and beseech you that, daily bound by a covenant of love and mutually perceiving the same things with one mind, you strive in virtue to drive off and eliminate all dissensions which the ancient enemy labors to sow. Strive with all humility and mildness to preserve an all-embracing unity of spirit in the bond of peace. For you are wise enough to know how necessary that sacerdotal and faithful unity of mind, will, and judgment is, and how it contributes to the prosperity of the Church and the procurement of eternal salvation. This concord of minds and wills must be cultivated among you with all zeal, especially now, because by the admirable will of Napoleon, Emperor of the French, and because of the work of his government, the Catholic Church there enjoys all peace, tranquility, and good will. And this fortunate combination of affairs and times in that empire ought to be a greater stimulant for you to strive to do all things with one and the same purpose, so that the divine religion of Christ, His doctrine, and the probity of morals and piety may take the deepest roots in France. Then the finest, uncontaminated education of youth may prevail more from day to day. By these means, hostile attacks may then be more easily restrained and overcome, attacks which arise from the efforts of those who were and are the constant enemies of the Church and Jesus Christ.

4. Thus We ask you again and again with the greatest zeal We can muster that, in matters concerning the safeguarding of the Church and its salutary teaching and liberty, and in fulfilling all the other episcopal duties of your ministry, your greatest aim should be unity among yourselves. We want you to confidently consult Us and this Apostolic See to remove controversy in all matters of whatever kind. First of

all, since you know how much a good education, especially for the clergy, contributes to both sacred and public prosperity, do not neglect with concord of judgment to apply your thoughts and cares to this important matter. Never leave anything untried so that the clerics in your seminaries are formed early in all virtue, piety, and an ecclesiastical spirit; then they can grow in humility, without which we can never please God. At the same time, they should be diligently taught the humanities and the more austere disciplines, especially the sacred ones, free from the danger of any error. Thus they may acquire not only elegance in speaking and writing (this eloquence being both from the wisest works of the Holy Fathers and from the most renowned pagan authors expurgated of all flaws), but also an especially full and solid knowledge of the history of theological doctrines, ecclesiastical history, and the sacred canons, acquired from a source approved by this Apostolic See.

5. Then that illustrious clergy of France, which is resplendent with so much talent, piety, knowledge, ecclesiastical spirit, and singular service to this Apostolic See, will abound more each day with knowledgeable and zealous workers. These workers, distinguished in virtue and armed with salutary knowledge, may be able in time to help in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord and in refuting those who contradict them. They will be able not only to confirm the faithful of France in our holy religion, but also to propagate it by sacred missions among distant and pagan nations. To the great credit of their name, the clergy up to the present have done this, for the good of religion and the salvation of souls. Along with Us, you detest the great number of pestilential books, pamphlets, magazines, and posters which the virulent enemy of God and man incessantly spews forth to corrupt morals, attack the foundations of faith, and weaken the most sacred dogmas of our religion. Therefore, never cease to lead the flock entrusted to your care away from these poison pastures. Never cease to instruct, defend, and confirm them against the deluge of so many errors; use salutary and opportune admonitions and publications to do this.

6. And here We cannot help but remind you of the admonitions and counsels with which, four years ago, We strongly summoned all the bishops of the Catholic world to exhort men outstanding for talent and sound doctrine to publish appropriate writings with which they might enlighten the minds of people and dissipate the darkness of creeping errors. Strive to remove this deadly pestilence of books and magazines from the faithful given into your care. At the same time encourage with all benevolence and favor those men who, animated by a Catholic spirit and educated in literature and learning, will endeavor to write books and publish magazines. Do this so that the Catholic doctrine is defended and spread, that the venerable rights and documents of this Holy See remain sound, that opinions and doctrines opposed to the same See and its authority may be suppressed, and that the darkness of error is banished and the minds of men illumined with the sweet light of truth. And it will be for your episcopal solicitude and love to arouse such inspired Catholic writers, so that they continue with ever greater zeal and knowledge to defend the cause of Catholic truth. You must also admonish them

like a prudent father if their writings should offend Catholic teaching.

7. Now you know well that the most deadly foes of the Catholic religion have always waged a fierce war, but without success, against this Chair; they are by no means ignorant of the fact that religion itself can never totter and fall while this Chair remains intact, the Chair which rests on the rock which the proud gates of hell cannot overthrow^[5] and in which there is the whole and perfect solidity of the Christian religion.^[6] Therefore, because of your special faith in the Church and special piety toward the same Chair of Peter, We exhort you to direct your constant efforts so that the faithful people of France may avoid the crafty deceptions and errors of these plotters and develop a more filial affection and obedience to this Apostolic See. Be vigilant in act and word, so that the faithful may grow in love for this Holy See, venerate it, and accept it with complete obedience; they should execute whatever the See itself teaches, determines, and decrees. Here, however, We are hardly able to restrain Ourselves from telling you of the grief We experienced when, among other things, a recently published book reached Us; it was written in French with the title *Sur la situation presente de l'Eglise Gallicane relativement au droit coutumier*. Its author is totally opposed to all We so fervently commend, and so We have sent the book to Our Congregation of the Index to be disapproved and condemned.

8. But before We conclude, We remind you again of what We most desire: that is, that you reject all questioning and controversy which, as you know, disturb the peace and injure love and which afford arms to the enemies of the Church, arms with which to oppose and destroy her. Therefore let it be nearest to your heart to have peace among yourselves and to pursue peace with all, seriously reflecting that you are legates for Him who is not a God of dissension but of peace. He never ceased to prescribe peace to His disciples; indeed Christ, as each one of you knows, "promised all of his gifts and rewards in the preservation of peace. If we are the heirs of Christ, let us remain in the peace of Christ. If we are the sons of God, we must be peacemakers.... It is necessary that the sons of God be peaceful, meek of heart, simple in speech, united in affection, and joined faithfully among themselves with the ties of concord."^[7] We certainly have confidence in your virtue, religion, and piety; We do not doubt that by obeying most willingly Our paternal admonitions and desires, you will root out the seeds of all dissensions. By supporting each other patiently in love and collaborating in the Evangelical faith, you will continue with ever more active zeal to keep watch by night over the flocks entrusted to your care and execute assiduously every part of your duties, even to the consummation of the saints in the building up of the body of Christ. Be convinced of this, however, that nothing will be more pleasing to Us, nothing more desirable, than that you do all those things which We know contribute to your greater profit and that of your faithful. Meanwhile in the humility of Our heart We pray and beseech God always to pour out the abundance of His heavenly grace upon you. We ask His blessing upon your pastoral concerns and labors by which the faithful entrusted to your care may continue to progress toward their heavenly goal, pleasing God in all things and bearing fruit in every good work. As an auspice

of this divine help and as a proof of the burning love with which We embrace you, We eagerly bestow the Apostolic Blessing on you, beloved sons of Ours and venerable brothers, on all the clerics of those churches, and on the faithful laity.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, March 21, 1853, in the seventh year of Our Pontificate.

Endnotes

1. 2 Tm 4.3,4; 3.13.
2. St. Cyprian, epistle 45; St. Augustine, epistle 162; and others.
3. Acts of the Ephesian Council, 4.
4. St. Irenaeus, *adversus haereses*, chap. 3.
5. St. Augustine, in *Psal contr. part. Donat.*
6. Synodical letter of John of Constantinople, *ad Hormisd. Pont.*
7. St. Cyprian, *de int. Eccles.*