



On Promotion Of False Doctrines

Quanto Conficiamur Moerore

Encyclical Of Pope Pius IX

August 10, 1863

To Our Beloved Sons, S. R. E. Cardinals and to Our Venerable Brothers, the Archbishops and Bishops of Italy.

Our Beloved Sons and Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

How much cause we have to grieve over the most cruel and sacrilegious war brought upon the Catholic Church in almost all regions of the world during these turbulent times, and especially declared upon unhappy Italy before our very eyes many years ago by the Piedmontese Government and stirred up more violently day by day, each of you, our beloved sons and venerable brothers, easily understands. In the midst of our great distress, however, as long as you keep watch with us, we are deeply comforted and consoled. Although you are, indeed, most deplorably harassed by every grave injustice possible, torn away from your own flock, exiled and even cast into prison, nevertheless, with your profound virtue you have never neglected to speak and to write in ardent defense of the teachings of God, his Church, and this Apostolic See.

2. Consequently, we give thanks because you fervently rejoice to suffer insult in the name of Jesus. We extend to you merited praise in the words of our most saintly predecessor, Leo: "May you endure with all your heart the trials of your love, which you have undergone in reverence for the Catholic faith; may I accept the sufferings inflicted upon you as if I were bearing them myself. I know, however, that it is a cause of joy rather than of sorrow that with the strength of our Lord, Jesus Christ, you have persevered invincible in your evangelical and apostolic teaching . . . And when the enemies of the Christian faith were tearing you away from your respective churches, rather than being contaminated by their impiety, you preferred to endure the injustice of undergoing exile." [1]

3. Would that we could announce the end of such terrible calamities besetting the Church! Never will there be grief enough over the corruption of morals so extensively increasing and promoted by irreligious and obscene writings, theatrical

spectacles and meretricious houses established almost everywhere; by other depraved arts and monstrous portents of every error disseminated in all directions; by the abominable impurities of all vices and crimes growing constantly and the deadly virus of unbelief and indifferentism spread far and wide; by contempt for ecclesiastical authority, sacred things, and laws and by the outrageous plundering of Church possessions; by the bitter and constant abuse of consecrated Church officials, of the students of religious communities, of virgins dedicated to God; by the diabolical hatred of Christ, his Church, teaching, and of this Apostolic See. These and almost innumerable other evils perpetrated by the embittered enemies of the Catholic Church and faith, we are daily compelled to lament.

4. All these agonies seem to prolong and delay that most yearned for time when we shall see the full triumph of our most holy religion, of justice, and of truth. This triumph cannot fail us, however, even if it is not given us to know the time destined for it by almighty God. Even though our heavenly Father permits his holy Church to be afflicted and plagued by various tribulations and distresses while serving during this most miserable and earthly pilgrimage, nevertheless, because it has been founded by Christ, the Lord, upon an immovable and most firm rock, it cannot be shaken or overthrown by any force or violence. Rather, "it is strengthened, not weakened by persecutions. The Lord's vineyard is always clothed with a richer harvest, for while each grain dies singly, it is born again manyfold." [2]

5. That is what we see happening, beloved sons and venerable brothers, even in these most sorrowful times as a special blessing from God. For although the immaculate Spouse of Christ may be vehemently troubled at the present time by the work of the wicked, yet she is triumphing over her enemies. Yes, indeed, she is conquering her enemies and shines wonderfully bright with your unparalleled faithfulness, love, and respect towards us and this Chair of Peter, and with your outstanding constancy and that of the other venerable brothers, the bishops of the whole Catholic world. She shines with many pious works of Christian charity multiplying rapidly each day; with the light of blessed faith illuminating many regions evermore each day; with the exceptional love and devotion shown by Catholics towards the Church itself, towards us, and this Holy See; with the eminent and immortal glory of martyrdom. You know, in fact, how in Tonkin and especially in the regions of Cochin China, bishops, priests, laymen and even peaceful women themselves, and young boys and girls, emulating the martyrs with their unconquerable spirit and heroic virtue, disdained the most inhuman torture, and greatly rejoiced to pour out their lives for Christ. All these joys should be no slight consolation to us and to you in the midst of the overwhelming anguish that torments us.

6. Now, since our Apostolic Office demands we carefully and zealously defend the cause of the Church committed to us by Christ, we condemn those who attack and despise the Church itself, its sacred laws, ministers, and this Apostolic See. Hence, with this letter, once more we confirm, proclaim and condemn totally and singly

that which in many consistorial allocutions and in our other Letters we have been forced to deplore, declare and condemn.[3]

7. Here, too, our beloved sons and venerable brothers, it is again necessary to mention and censure a very grave error entrapping some Catholics who believe that it is possible to arrive at eternal salvation although living in error and alienated from the true faith and Catholic unity. Such belief is certainly opposed to Catholic teaching. There are, of course, those who are struggling with invincible ignorance about our most holy religion. Sincerely observing the natural law and its precepts inscribed by God on all hearts and ready to obey God, they live honest lives and are able to attain eternal life by the efficacious virtue of divine light and grace. Because God knows, searches and clearly understands the minds, hearts, thoughts, and nature of all, his supreme kindness and clemency do not permit anyone at all who is not guilty of deliberate sin to suffer eternal punishments.

8. Also well known is the Catholic teaching that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church. Eternal salvation cannot be obtained by those who oppose the authority and statements of the same Church and are stubbornly separated from the unity of the Church and also from the successor of Peter, the Roman Pontiff, to whom "the custody of the vineyard has been committed by the Savior." [4] The words of Christ are clear enough: "If he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you a Gentile and a tax collector;" [5] "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you, rejects me, and he who rejects me, rejects him who sent me;" [6] "He who does not believe will be condemned;" [7] "He who does not believe is already condemned;" [8] "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters." [9] The Apostle Paul says that such persons are "perverted and self-condemned;" [10] the Prince of the Apostles calls them "false teachers . . . who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master. . . bringing upon themselves swift destruction." [11]

9. God forbid that the children of the Catholic Church should even in any way be unfriendly to those who are not at all united to us by the same bonds of faith and love. On the contrary, let them be eager always to attend to their needs with all the kind services of Christian charity, whether they are poor or sick or suffering any other kind of visitation. First of all, let them rescue them from the darkness of the errors into which they have unhappily fallen and strive to guide them back to Catholic truth and to their most loving Mother who is ever holding out her maternal arms to receive them lovingly back into her fold. Thus, firmly founded in faith, hope, and charity and fruitful in every good work, they will gain eternal salvation.

10. Furthermore, beloved sons and venerable brothers, we cannot be silent about another most pernicious error, an evil that is pitifully tearing apart and deeply disturbing minds, hearts, and souls. We are referring to that unbridled and damnable self-love and self-interest that drive many to seek their own advantage and profit with clearly no regard for their neighbor. We mean that thoroughly insatiable passion for power and possessions that overrides all the rules of justice

and honesty and never ceases by every means possible to amass and greedily heap up wealth. Completely absorbed in the things of earth, forgetful of God, religion and their souls, they wrongly place all their happiness in procuring riches and money. Let such people recollect and meditate seriously upon the very sobering words of Christ, the Lord: "What will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?"[12] Let them also reflect upon the teaching of Paul: "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that drag men down to ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evil; it is through this craving that some have wandered away and pierced their hearts with many pangs."[13]

11. Now, truly, we cannot conceal the fact that we are in great anguish since there are some clergy in Italy who, forgetful of their vocation, do not blush in the least to spread abroad false doctrine, even in subversive writings. They arouse the people against us and this Apostolic See; they oppose our civil rule and that of the Chair itself; they shamelessly and zealously support the wicked enemies of the Catholic Church and this same See. Deserting their bishops and us, emboldened by the approval of the Piedmontese government and its Parliament, these ecclesiastics in open contempt of ecclesiastical censure and penalty have become impudently fearless in organizing certain condemnable societies commonly known as Liberal Clerical, of Mutual Assistance, For the Emancipation of the Italian Clergy, and other associations animated by the same depraved spirit. Although deservedly forbidden to perform their holy ministry, nevertheless, like brazen intruders, they sinfully and illicitly exercise it in many churches. We, therefore, disapprove and condemn the behavior of the same ecclesiastics. At the same time, we admonish and exhort, again and again, these unfortunate men to return to their right mind and heart and take thought for their own salvation, seriously considering "that God tolerates no example of conduct more from others than from priests when He sees those, whom He ordains for the improvement of others, give example of their own depravity."[14] Let them fervently reflect that their confused state must be repaired before the tribunal of Christ. May these pitiful churchmen heed our paternal advice and willingly render us the consolation of a repentant clergy. May they seek refuge in us day by day, begging pardon for their defection with suppliant prayer and humbly imploring absolution from ecclesiastical censure.

12. You are certainly aware, our beloved sons and venerable brothers, that every kind of impious and deceitful writing, lies, calumny, and blasphemy has been let loose from hell. No pain has been spared to transfer schools to non-Catholic teachers and to appropriate churches for non-Catholic worship. With a multiple of other, surely diabolical treacheries, arts, and undertakings, the enemies of God employ every effort to destroy completely-if that were possible -- the Catholic Church, seduce and corrupt the people, especially guileless youth, and uproot our holy faith and religion from the souls of all.

13. We are fully confident that you, our beloved sons and venerable brothers, strengthened by the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, will continue steadfast in your

outstanding episcopal zeal. With one mind and heart and with redoubled dedication, may you persist in defending the House of Israel, may you fight the good fight for the faith and defend from the snares of the enemy the faithful entrusted to your care. Admonish and exhort them to be strong in our sacred faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Urge them to persevere firmly established in our divine religion, which alone is true and eternal and prepares for salvation and even, to a very great extent, preserves and prospers civil society.

14. Through the parish priests chiefly and other ecclesiastics known for integrity of life, gravity of morals, and constant adherence to sound doctrine, may you teach unremittingly and accurately: at one time preaching the divine word, at another instructing the people in the mysteries of our august religion, its doctrine, precepts, and discipline. You, above all, know that many evils generally arise from ignorance of divine matters essential for salvation. Hence, you will understand that it behooves you to use every care and diligence that so detrimental a condition be prevented.

15. Before we bring our letter to its close, however, we cannot restrain from bestowing due praise upon the Italian clergy, who with the highest degree of devotion to us and this Chair of Peter and to their bishops, have certainly not strayed. Following the noble example of their bishops and bearing all hardships with utmost patience, they fulfill their duty most laudably. We put our trust in the hope, moreover, that this same clergy, with the help of divine grace and walking worthily in their vocation, will always strive to be shining examples of piety and virtue.

16. We continue, too, with fitting and public praise for the many consecrated virgins who violently driven from their monasteries, despoiled of their recompense, and reduced to beggary, have not broken faith with their Spouse. Enduring the most deplorable conditions, they pray day and night in the holy house of God where they patiently await His mercy and beseech Him for the salvation of all, even that of their enemies.

17. We rejoice, also, in praising the people of Italy who, with deep Catholic sensibilities, abhor the many impious and destructive efforts taken against the Church. With filial piety, respect and obedience, they take great pride in honoring us, this Holy See, and their bishops. Amid very serious difficulties and impeded by dangers, each day and in many ways they faithfully offer us tokens of their love and devotion, alleviating the wants of this Apostolic See, at times with money, at other times with other gifts.

18. In the midst of so many calamities and confronted with such fury against the Church, we are not despondent for "Christ is our counsel and our strength; without him we can do nothing, through him we can do all things. While confirming the preachers of the Gospel and the ministers of the sacraments, he said: 'Lo, I am with you always, to the end of time.'"[15] We know for certain, moreover, that the

gates of hell will never prevail against the Church which stands and will stand immovable with Christ Jesus, our Lord, as guardian and protector, who has built the Church and who has been "yesterday and today and forever." [16]

19. With ever more ardent zeal and humility of heart, let us, our beloved sons and venerable brothers, never stop offering our prayers and petitions to God through Jesus Christ that His Church, driven by this most turbulent tempest, may recover from such great disasters, enjoy the most blessed peace and freedom throughout the world, and gain new and more splendid triumphs over her enemies. Let us pray that the errant be flooded with the light of his divine grace, may turn back from the path of error into the way of truth and justice and, experiencing the worthy fruit of repentance, may possess perpetual love and fear of his holy name.

20. That the merciful God may more readily grant our most fervent prayers, let us invoke patronage of the immaculate and most holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Let us seek likewise the intercession of the most holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, and of all the blessed in heaven, that with their efficacious prayers before God, they may implore mercy and graces for all and powerfully avert all adversities and dangers afflicting the Church everywhere and especially in Italy.

21. Finally, as a most certain pledge of our singular benevolence toward you, we lovingly impart our heartfelt Apostolic Blessing upon you, beloved sons and venerable brothers, and upon the flock committed to your care.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, 10 August, 1863, in the eighteenth year of Our Pontificate.

1. St. Leo, epistle 154 to the bishops of Egypt, ed. Baller.
2. St. Leo, sermon 82 on the feast of the apostles Peter and Paul.
3. Addresses on 20 June 1859; 26 September 1859; 13 July 1860; 28 September 1860; 17 December 1860; 18 March 1861; 30 September 1861; and 9 June 1862. Encyclical letters on 18 June 1859 and 19 January 1860. Apostolic letter on 26 March 1860.
4. Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in its letter to Pope Leo.
5. Mt 15.17.
6. Lk 10.16.
7. Mk 16.16.
8. Jn 3.18.
9. Lk 11.23.
10. Ti 3.11.
11. 2 Pt 2.1.
12. Mt 16.26.
13. I Tm 6.9-10.
14. St. Gregory the Great, homily 17 in Evangel.
15. St. Leo, epistle 167 to Rusticus, bishop of Narbonne.

16. Heb 13.8.