



On His Sacerdotal Jubilee

Quod Anniversarius

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII promulgated on April 1, 1888.

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Whole World in Favor and Communion with the Apostolic See

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

We return thanks as is meet, to the sovereign goodness of God, Whose will and providential wish governs the whole of men's lives, that the fiftieth anniversary of Our priesthood has shown upon the Church. Moreover, the wonderful unanimity of hearts displayed in the tokens of respect, the liberal gifts, the public manifestations of readiness, is such as He alone could have inspired, on Whom entirely depends the spirits, the wills, and the hearts of men, and who rules and directs events for the glory of the Christian religion.

2. It is indeed a wonderful and memorable event, whereby the enemies of the Church, in spite of themselves, whether they desire it or not, see with their own eyes that the Church maintains her divine life, and the virtue with which she is endowed from heaven; this indeed makes them feel that the impious strive in vain when they rage and plan foolish attacks against the Lord and against His Christ.

3. In order that the memory of this heavenly benefit may be continued, and that its utility may be spread as far and wide as possible, We have laid open the treasures of heavenly graces to all the flock committed to Our care. We have not been wanting in imploring the succors of divine mercy in favor of those who are outside the ark of salvation whereby We hope to obtain that all nations and all peoples, united in the faith by the bond of charity may soon form one flock under one shepherd. This is what We have asked of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Our supplications on the occasion of the late solemn canonizations.

4. For lifting up Our eyes towards the Church triumphant We have solemnly decreed and accorded on the one hand the supreme honor of the Saints; on the other the title of Blessed, to those Christian heroes, the examination of whose sublime virtues and miracles have been happily concluded according to due rights of law, so that the heavenly Jerusalem may be joined in a communion of the same joy with those who still pursue on earth the pilgrimage which is to lead them to God.

5. But by the help of God, in order that We may crown this joy, We desire to fulfill, as far as lays in Our power, Our apostolic duty of charity by extending the plenitude of Our infinite spiritual treasures to those beloved children of the Church who, having died the death of the just, have quitted this world of strife with the sign of faith, and are branches of the mystical vine, though they cannot enter into everlasting rest until they have paid the uttermost farthing which they owe to the avenging justice of God.

6. We are moved to this both by the pious desires of Catholics to whom We know that Our resolution will be especially grateful, and by the fearful tortures which the souls of the departed suffer, but We are also animated by the custom of the Church, which, amidst the most joyous solemnities of the year, fails not to make a holy and salutary commemoration of the dead that they may be delivered from their sins.

7. Therefore, since it is certain by the doctrine of the Catholic Church, that the souls detained in purgatory are benefited by the prayers of the faithful, and especially by the august Sacrifice of the Altar, We think we can give them no more useful and desirable pledge of Our love than by everywhere increasing the offering of the pure oblation of the Most Holy Sacrifice of Our Divine Mediator, for the extinction of their pain. We therefore decree, with all the necessary dispensations and indulgences, the last Sunday of next September as a day of ample expiation on which will be celebrated by Ourselves, and equally by each of Our brethren the Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, and also by other prelates exercising jurisdiction in a diocese, each in his own church, whether patriarchal, metropolitan, or cathedral, a special Mass for the Dead with the greatest solemnity possible, and according to the rite ordered in the Missal for the Commemoration of all Souls.

We desire also that this should take place in the same manner in all parish and collegiate churches, both of the secular and regular clergy, and by all priests generally, provided that they do not omit the proper office of the Mass for the day where it is obligatory.

9. As to the faithful, We strenuously exhort them after Sacramental confession devoutly to partake of the Bread of Angels for the benefit of the souls in purgatory. We grant by Our Apostolic authority a plenary indulgence to be gained by such of the faithful, applicable to the dead, and the favor of a privileged altar to all those who, as has been said before, say Mass.

10. Thus those pious souls who expiate the remainder of their sins amidst such tortures will receive a special and opportune consolation, thanks to the life giving Victim which the Universal Church united to her visible head, and animated with a like spirit of charity, will offer to God that He may admit them to the dwelling of His consolation, to light and eternal peace.

11. In the meanwhile, Venerable Brethren, We affectionately grant you in the Lord as a pledge of celestial gifts, the Apostolic Benediction, to you and to all the clergy and people committed to your charge.

Given at St. Peter's, at Rome, at the solemnity of Easter, in the year 1888, the eleventh of our Pontificate.