

From this overflow of errors and the unbridled license of thinking, and writing, public manners are deteriorated, the most holy religion of Christ despised, the majesty of the Divine worship scorned, the power of the Apostolic See is thwarted, the authority of the Church opposed and reduced to a vile servitude, the rights of Bishops trampled under foot, the sanctity of marriage violated, the influence of all power melted away, and with so many other evils to the Christian commonwealth, as well as the civil state, that we are compelled, Venerable Brethren to weep over them and mingle our tears with yours.

Therefore, in such vicissitudes of religious affairs, and in such critical periods, we being earnestly solicitous for the safety of the whole flock of the Lord divinely committed to our care shall certainly not leave untried or unattempted any duty of our Apostolic ministry, by which, with all our strength, we may seek counsel for the good of the whole Christian family. But at the same time we earnestly in the Lord appeal to your eminent piety and prudence, Venerable Brethren, that with help from Heaven you may with us boldly defend the cause of God and of His Holy Church as becomes the place you hold and the dignity with which you are invested.

That it becomes you to fight valiantly, you will understand, as you are not ignorant with how many and how great wounds the stainless spouse of Christ is pierced, and with how fierce an assault of bitter enemies she is beset. You know how especially to defend and preserve the Catholic Faith with episcopal strength and firmness, and to watch with unceasing care that the flock committed to you, may be retained in that faith firmly and immovably, which unless one preserves whole and uncorrupted, without doubt he shall perish eternally. (17.) In order, therefore, to preserve and protect this Faith by the discharge of your pastoral duties, apply yourselves diligently and without ceasing to instruct in it all men, to confirm those who waver, to convince those who gainsay it, to strengthen the weak in Faith, never overlooking or enduring anything which may appear even in the slightest degree to violate the purity of the Faith. With no less energy of mind should you encourage in all things union with this Catholic Church, beyond which there is no salvation, and obedience towards this chair of St. Peter, whereon the whole superstructure of our holy religion rests, as on a secure foundation.

And with equal constancy watch over the keeping of the most holy laws of the Church, by which indeed virtue, religion, and piety do best increase and flourish.

And "as it is great piety to lay bare the lurking places of the wicked, and in them to overcome the Devil himself, whom they serve" (18), we intreat and admonish you that with all diligence and labour you expose to the Faithful the multiform snares, deceptions, errors, frauds, and machinations of evil men, and that you diligently turn them away from pestiferous books, and strenuously exhort them that flying away as from the face of a serpent, from the sects and the associations of the impious, they may most carefully avoid all things that are hurtful to the integrity of faith, religion, and morals. For this purpose let it never happen that you desist from preaching the Gospel, for by that means the Christian people becoming daily more instructed in the precepts of the most Holy Christian Law, may increase in the knowledge of God, and do good, and walk in the way of the Lord.

And as you know that your ministry is the ministry of Christ who declared himself meek and humble of heart, and who came to call not the just, but sinners, leaving to us an example that we might follow in his footsteps, do not fail in the spirit of lenity and meekness with fatherly admonition and advice, to correct, reprove, intreat, or rebuke in all gentleness with patience and doctrine those whom you find breaking the Commandments of the Lord, and straying from the paths of truth and justice, as benevolence is often more efficacious in correction than authority, entreaty more than menace, and charity more than power (19).

This also, Venerable Brothers, strive with all your energies to accomplish that the Faithful may cultivate charity, seek peace, zealously perform the duties of charity and peace, so that all dissensions, enmities, strife, and envyings being destroy-

ed, all may delight in mutual charity, and being perfectly of one mind and one feeling, they may feel and speak, and know the same things in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Apply yourselves to inculcate on the Christian people the due obedience and subjection towards princes and powers, teaching according to the admonition of the Apostle (20), that there is no power except it be from God, and that to resist power of God's ordination is to draw down condemnation on themselves, and therefore the precept to obey the powers that be can never now, by any individual, be violated without crime, unless, indeed, the thing commanded be opposed to the laws of God and the Church.

Now, as there is nothing which more incites others to piety and constantly disposes to the worship of God than the life and example of those who dedicate themselves to the divine ministry (21), and as the Priests are, so does it often happen the people are also,—you will, in your singular wisdom, perceive, Venerable Brothers, that it will behoove you to use great care and zeal, that in the clergy a gravity of manners, integrity of life, holiness and learning may shine out, and ecclesiastical discipline be strictly preserved, as prescribed by the canons of the Church, and where it has lapsed may be restored to pristine splendour.

Therefore, as you very well know, it becomes you to be wary, that, according to the precept of the Apostle, you may not hastily or lightly, impose hands on any one word intimate into holy orders, or admit to the administration of the sacred mysteries those only who, strictly and carefully examined and proved, appear adorned with all virtues, and, regarded with approval by the wise, may become to your diocesses, both of use and ornament, and who, declining all things which are forbidden to the clergy, and lending themselves to reading, exhortation, and teaching, may be an example to the Faithful in word, deed, in charity, faith, and chastity; (22) may win reverence from all men, and help to form the people's minds, and inflame and excite to the love of the Christian religion. For "it is better," as Benedict XIV., our predecessor, of blessed memory, said, "to have fewer ministers, but those honest, suitable, and useful, than a larger number of men who, for the edification of the body of Christ, which is the Church, might be of no avail.

You are not ignorant that you ought, with even greater care to inquire concerning the morals and the science of those to whom are committed the direction of souls that they, as faithful dispensers of the treasures of God's grace, may continually apply themselves to support and assist the people confided to them, by the administration of the sacraments, the preaching of the Divine word, and the example of good works, instilling into them the precepts of the Gospel, and leading them into the paths of salvation.

You know that a clergy being ignorant or negligent, of their duties, the morals of the people also instantly fall away, Christian discipline is relaxed, the practice of religion absented, and all the vices easily glide into that Church. Lest that the word of God which "full of life, and power, and sharper than a two-edged sword" (23), was established for the salvation of souls, should become unfruitful through the ministers, cease not, Venerable Brothers, to demand of the preachers of the Divine word that being themselves deeply penetrated with that same Divine word, that well considering in their own souls the gravity of their office, they may exercise their Evangelic ministry, not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, not with the parade and vanity of ambitious eloquence, but with the assistance of the spirit and the virtue from on high. That rightly treating the word of truth, and preaching not their own selves but Christ crucified, they may announce to the people in clear and intelligible language, yet in a style full of dignity, the dogmas and precepts of our holy religion according to the Catholic Church and the Fathers, so that by detailing explanations of individual duties all may be turned from crime and won to piety, and thus the Faithful, fed and nourished by the word of God, may abstain from all vices, practice all virtues, escape eternal punishment, and attain to heavenly glory.