

Catholic Church with the right of dominion and of possession over them, and that the Church, in turn, committed them to the Friars Minor for their custody and preservation. Thus a great good will towards the Friars labouring in Palestine has ever been shown by the Holy See. For instance Gregory IX declares it in his Apostolic Letter of 1230: "*Si Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*" in which he recommends the Friars to the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch. Again, no small proof of it is found in the fact that the Friars have frequently been chosen as special legates sent to plead for the defense of Christians before the Sultans of Egypt. By the same benevolence, the Friars eventually obtained possession of the Holy Places, and, from that time on, whenever the occasion presented itself, the Roman Pontiffs confirmed the privilege of keeping the said Places. Thus Clement VI in his Constitution: "*Gratias agimus*" of November 21, 1342; Martin V in his Constitution: "*Ad assiduam*" of July 7, 1420; and Innocent XI, who, in his Constitution: "*Exponi nobis*" issued in the year 1680, says: "As up to now by special concession of the Apostolic See the Holy Places of Palestine, or of the Holy Land, and especially the Most Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord Jesus Christ, have been guarded by the Friars Minor, so shall it be in the future: by Our Apostolic authority and in virtue of the present letters, We declare and ordain that by the same Friars, the Holy Places shall still be guarded, ruled and governed."

Everyone knows the varied and many-sided nature of this charge: the labors and expense it entails. The Friars Minor have to safe-guard the divine worship in the Sanctuaries of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and elsewhere; to entertain and shelter without charge pious pilgrims from all over the world; to exercise the care of souls for the Latin Catholics of Judea, Galilee, Syria, and Cyprus, establishing schools, orphanages, and other institutions of like nature; to undertake missions among infidels and non-Catholics, particularly those in Upper Syria and Armenia. In the exercise of these arduous duties during so many centuries one can hardly conceive of the number of trials and the sufferings of every kind which the Friars have undergone, very many of them have laid down their life for the Catholic Faith; many others became plague-stricken while performing their ministry, and died