

The Pope and the Orders.

LETTERS OF HIS HOLINESS LEO XIII,

TO OUR DEAR SONS,

The Superiors of the Religious Orders and Institutes Leo XIII, Pope.

Dear Sons, Health and Apostolic
Benediction :

AT all times the religious families have received from the Apostolic See particular assurance of loving and considerate solicitude, whether they were in the enjoyment of the benefits of peace, or, as in our days, undergoing such trials as those which now assail them. The onslaught, which, in certain countries, has been recently made against the orders and the institutes subject to your authority, cause Us the profoundest grief, and Holy Church is bowed down in sorrow because of it, for it feels itself cut to the quick in its own inherent rights, and seriously impeded in the fulfilment of its work which, for its proper exercise, requires the concurrence of both clergies, secular and religious. In truth, who touches its priests touches the apple of its eye. For Our part, you know that We have endeavored, by all the means in Our power, to prevent this unworthy persecution, and have striven to avert from those countries the consequent disasters which will be as great as they are undeserved. Hence it is that on many occasions, in the name of religion, of justice and of civilization, We have pleaded your cause with all the power at Our command ; but We have hoped in vain that Our remonstrances would be listened to ; for, lo ! a nation which was singularly fruitful in religious vocations, a nation on which We have always bestowed the greatest consideration, has, by the authority of its government, approved and promulgated these unjust and discrim-

inating laws, against which, a few months ago, We have lifted Our voice in the hope of preventing their being put upon the statutes.

Remembering Our sacred duties and following the example of Our illustrious predecessors, We have put the seal of condemnation on these laws as being contrary to that natural and evangelical right which is conferred by constant tradition ; the right, namely, to form associations for the purpose of leading lives which are not only honest in themselves but marked by exalted sanctity ; We have condemned them because they are contrary to that unquestionable right which the Church possesses of founding religious institutions exclusively subject to its authority to aid it in the accomplishment of its divine mission ; especially when, in this instance, the exercise of that right has resulted in the greatest benefits in the religious and civil order and redounded to the advantage of that noble nation itself.

And now We feel moved to open to you Our paternal heart in the desire to give you, and to receive from you some holy consolation and, as the same time, to address to you the advice which the occasion calls for, in order that remaining still more firm in the time of trial you will gain greater merit in the sight of God and men.

Among the many motives of courage which spring from our faith, recall, dear sons, that solemn word of Jesus Christ : "Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly for my sake." (Matt. 5, 11.) Reproaches, cal-