

A SIGNIFICANT CONSISTORY.

ALLOCUTION

Of Our Holy Father, Pius X.

By Divine Providence Pope, at the Consistory Held on November 9, 1903.

(Translated for New York Freeman's Journal).



Venerable Brothers: Speaking to you today for the first time from this place We are impelled to refer to Our conduct recently in endeavoring by Our entreaties to be allowed to decline the supreme dignity of the Apostolate which your suffrages have conferred upon Us. For We would not have you think that it was prompted by want of respect for the expression of your will and for the very honorable judgment you formed of Us, or by unwillingness on Our part to work in a more enlarged capacity for the Church to which our whole life and energy are given. But knowing intimately Our own lack of force and slender abilities, and bearing in mind at the same time all that is justly expected of the Roman Pontiff, who will wonder that We should have considered Ourselves to be plainly unequal to such a great burden. To have the precepts of the Gospel commonly observed, and the evangelical counsels duly guarded; to defend and maintain the rights of the Church; to give judgment on the many important questions connected with domestic life, the training of youth, the principles regulating jurisprudence and property; to settle the disturbed conditions of society according to Christian equity, in short by purging the earth to prepare citizens for heaven—to perform worthily these and the like offices appertaining to the Apostolic office seemed, We repeat, to be beyond Our powers. Moreover, as We have recently stated in Our Encyclical letter, the place was to be filled of a Pontiff whose zeal in increasing religion and promoting in a great variety of ways the practice of piety, whose wisdom in dispelling the errors of our times and awakening men to a full sense of Christian doctrine and life both in public and in private, whose solicitude in raising the fortunes of the lowly and indigent and in providing suitable remedies for the drawbacks which affect society, have been so brilliant as to win for him the admiration and the eternal favor of the human race. Who would not be alarmed at the thought of undertaking a heritage of such magnitude and excellence? We were certainly alarmed and greatly, when We reflected on Our own slender capacity.

But since God in His inscrutable will has been pleased to lay upon Us the burden of the supreme Apostolate, We will support it, trusting entirely to His aid and assistance. And We have resolutely determined, as far as in Us lies, all Our cares and thoughts will be centred in striving to preserve sacred and inviolate the deposit of the faith and in working for the salvation of all; and that We shall not shun labor or trouble of any kind to this end.

And as it is necessary and of the first importance for the interests of Christianity that the Pontiff be and be seen to be free and not subject to any power in the government of the Church, We do complain, as We are bound by the nature of Our office and by the

oath We have taken and as holy Religion requires that We should complain, of the most grave outrage which has been inflicted on the Church in this respect.

We are indeed greatly cheered by the thought that in the fulfillment of this grave and difficult ministry We shall have the valuable assistance of your prudence and wisdom. For We are aware that your college has been principally given to Us by the design and blessing of God in order that you by your advice and your labors may be of precious aid in the administration of the Church. We need hardly say, therefore, that it will always be Our solemn care to seek the aid of your counsel and skill in the general course of affairs, and especially in matters of moment, and this in order that each of you may take his share of the immense burden of office which weighs upon Us. The work is one which pertains to immortal uses rather than those that are fleeting; it is bounded by no limits of place, but includes the interests of the whole world; it is concerned with the maintenance of the reverence due under all aspects to the precepts of the Gospel and it is destined to bring within Our solicitude not only the faithful but all men for whom Christ died.

It is strange then, to find so many, influenced by the passion for novelty so characteristic of our time, speculating as to what will be the tenor of Our Pontificate. As if there were any food for inquiry, and it were not plain that the way We intend to follow, and the only one possible for Us, is that followed hitherto by Our predecessors. We have already declared that Our aim shall be: To restore all things in Christ, and since Christ is the Truth, our first duty will be to illustrate and proclaim the truth. Hence, it will be our care that the word of Jesus Christ, simple, clear and efficacious, shall ever flow from Our lips, and be deeply impressed on men's minds to be sedulously kept. The keeping of His word He Himself has prescribed as the surest means of knowing the truth; "If you continue in my word, you shall be my first disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John viii., 31, 32).

In the task of preserving the law of truth and Christianity, it will be necessary for Us to treat of and proclaim just perceptions of great issues, whether derived from nature or divinely handed down, which are now obscured and erased everywhere; to strengthen the foundations of discipline, authority, justice and equity now undermined; to direct all and severally, not only those who obey, but those who command, as being all children of the same Father, to righteousness in public and private life and in social and political movements.

True, We are aware that some will be found to take umbrage when We say that it behooves Us to concern Ourselves with political affairs also. But every impartial judge must recognize that the Pontiff cannot separate the treatment of political matters from his office as teacher of faith and morals. Moreover, since he is the head and ruler of a perfect society such as the Church is, made up of men and established among men, he must assuredly desire, if he wishes to promote the security and liberty of Catholics in all parts of the world, to be on good terms with the heads of states and other civil rulers.

Man naturally thirsts after the truth, and embraces it lovingly and clings to it when it has been offered to him, but, on the other hand, the corruption of nature causes only too many to hate above all else the proclamation of the truth, for thus are their errors exposed and their passions checked. But the abuse and threats of all such shall have no power to move Us, for We are sustained by that admonition of Jesus Christ: "If the world hate you know that it hated Me before you" (John xv., 18). After all what need is there to show the falsity of the envious charges made against the Church—that she opposes liberty, thwarts

science, puts a drag on human progress? The Church does indeed condemn and deem worthy of severe restraint that unchecked license of thought and action for which no authority, human or divine, is sacred, no rights respected, and which, undermining the foundations of order and discipline, are hurrying states to their destruction. This is not liberty, but the perversion of liberty. Sincere and genuine liberty, the liberty which permits everybody to do what is right and just, the Church not only does not hamper, but she has ever proclaimed that it should be of the very broadest kind. Not less at variance with truth is her assertion that faith is opposed to science. On the contrary, faith is of service to science and that in no small degree. For, in addition to those truths which are above nature and of which man can have no knowledge but that derived from faith, there are many and very important ones in the order of nature to which human reason may attain, but which are perceived with much greater certainty and clearness when illuminated with the light of faith. As for the rest, it is absurd to set one class of truths against another, since both kinds proceed from the same source and origin, which is God. Why then should not We, who are the guardians of Catholic truth, approve all the discoveries of genius, all the inventions of experimental science, every increase of knowledge, in short, whatever is calculated to promote the interests of human life? Nay, the example left by Our predecessors shows that all this is rather to be encouraged by Us. But on the other hand, We are bound, from the nature of Our Apostolic office, to deny and condemn those conclusions of modern philosophy and social theories by which the course of human affairs is led whither the divine precepts do not allow. But in this We are hindering not the advance of humanity but its destruction.

But, though entering upon the necessary conflict in the cause of truth, We are full of compassion for the foes and opponents of truth—We most lovingly embrace them, and tearfully commend them to the goodness of God, for, though with the Roman Pontificate it is a most sacred law to approve and protect all that is true, just and right, and to detest and reject all that is false, unjust and wrong, it is no less bound to show mercy and pardon to sinners, after the likeness to its Author who prayed for transgressors. For God, who was in Christ reconciling the world to Him, has decreed that principally through the Roman Pontiffs as the Vicars of His Son shall the ministry of reconciliation be continued and by their authority and judgment be administered. To think, therefore, that it rests with Us to conciliate the favor of any one is to judge insultingly and perversely of Our charge and office which binds Us to show fatherly kindness toward all.

We do not indeed hope to attain fully what Our predecessors have been unable to attain—to make truth triumph everywhere over widely diffused errors and over injustice of every kind; but as We have already said it shall be Our aim to strive after this end with all Our energy. And even though Our aspirations may not be fully realized We shall at least, by the help of God in strengthening the empire of truth among the good, and in extending to many others not badly disposed for its reception.

And now, Venerable Brothers, it is Our pleasant duty to apply Ourselves to the task of adding new members to your illustrious college. This honor We have decreed to confer today on two illustrious men. One of them, honored by your own suffrages during the interregnum, has in a remarkable way proved to Us within the last few months that he is endowed with great gifts of mind and character, and with equal prudence in the transaction of affairs. The other We Ourselves have long and intimately known to be adorned with the choicest ornaments of piety and doctrine and to have

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