

more readily arrive, by accomplishing their mutual duties, at the possession of temporal and eternal felicity. But when impious laws, having no regard to the respect due to this great sacrament, have placed it in the same category as purely civil contracts, the result is the deplorable consequences that, the dignity of Christian marriage being violated, some citizens have substituted legal concubinage for the legitimate union; the married couple have neglected their mutual duties of fidelity, the children have not observed the respect and obedience which they owed to their parents, the ties of domestic affection have been relaxed, and, what is a most detestable example, the gravest prejudice to public morals, pernicious and regrettable separations have very often succeeded to an insensate love. It is impossible, Venerable Brethren, that the sight of these lamentable calamities should not awaken Our zeal, and should not incite you to recommend seriously and constantly to the faithful confided to your vigilance, to lend a docile ear to the doctrines which treat of the sanctity of Christian marriage, and to obey the laws by which the Church regulates the duties of parents and children.

It is thus you will bring about a desirable reform in the morals and manner of living of each man in particular; for as an unsound tree produces rotten branches and miserable fruit, the sad blot which depraves families is contagious, and becomes a cause of vice and sin in each individual member. On the contrary, if the family is governed by the rules of Christian life, each member of it will gradually become accustomed to cherish religion and piety, to reject with horror false and pernicious doctrines, to practise virtue, to render obedience to the authorities, and to repress the insatiable egotism which so much lowers and enfeebles human nature. With this object it would certainly be very useful to direct and encourage those associations which have principally been established of late years to the great advantage of Catholic interests. Those matters which are embraced in Our hopes and wishes are immense, Venerable Brethren, and above human strength; but as God has founded His Church for the salvation of the people, promising to aid