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PASTORAL ADDRESS OF THE BISHOPS OF THE PROVINCE OF DUBLIN ASSEMBLED IN SYNOD.

TO THE CATHOLIC CLERGY AND LAITY OF THE PROVINCE.

With sentiments of the profoundest gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts for the merciful providence with which He has watched over us and our holy religion amidst the trials and sorrows of past times, and preserved us for happier days, we have to announce to you, dearly beloved brethren, the termination of the first Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of Leinster that has been held for the last two hundred years.

In conformity with the discipline of the Holy Catholic Church, this Synod was convened for the purpose of promoting piety and virtue, correcting abuses, providing for the interests of religion, cultivating Christian charity among all classes, and cementing more closely the bonds of union which bind us to the Apostolic See, the fountain and centre of all spiritual jurisdiction.

To aid us in securing the attainment of these objects, so important for your eternal welfare, but which mere human means could not secure, we demand your co-operation, inviting you to raise your hands in fervent prayer to Heaven for your Prelates, to beg of the Father of Lights to guide and direct them, and to assist them in their deliberations. In the same spirit of distrust in our own strength, but of confidence in the power of prayer, we opened our proceedings by a solemn invocation of the Holy Ghost, imploring of Him who promised to be with His Church all days, even to the consummation of ages, to be with us and to assist us by His lights and inspirations, and to give us all the wisdom and prudence that are necessary to feed the portion of Christ's flock committed to our care.

Having invoked the blessings of Heaven upon us, we commenced and continued our deliberations with the image of our crucified Redeemer before us, to teach us that the Prelates of the Church should know nothing but Christ, and Him crucified, and that they should be filled and animated with that spirit of charity which induced Him to shed His blood on Mount Calvary for the salvation of our immortal souls.

It must have fallen under your observation, dearly beloved brethren, that, when we were assembled before the altar of the living God, we made a solemn profession of our Faith and of the obedience and veneration which we owe to the successor of St. Peter, Christ's Vicar on earth. We were not called on to devise new schemes of belief, nor were we tossed about by any wind of doctrine. Our Faith is that of the Holy Catholic Church, unchanged by the lapse of ages or the vicissitudes of temporal things. As there is but one God and one Baptism, so there is but one Faith, and that Faith, like its Divine Author, Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. By our obedience to the Holy See, we are connected with the rock upon which Christ built His Church, against which the gates of Hell shall never prevail, and we enjoy the inestimable benefit of being joined in communion with the countless millions of Catholics who are spread over the face of the globe, who all profess the same doctrines, offer the same sacrifice, receive the same Sacraments, obey the same Supreme Head, and thus constitute that wonderful kingdom of God upon earth, which (according to the Prophet) was to consume and to break into pieces all other kingdoms, but which itself was never to have an end.—Dan. ii., 44.

Having thus assembled in accordance with the spirit of the Church, and under the influence and invocation of the Holy Ghost, we confidently trust that the Synod just terminated will be the source of many graces and benedictions to our province. We cannot, however, as yet inform you of the nature of its decisions, as before they shall be published we shall submit them to the examination and judgment of the Apostolic See, to whom the wisdom of the Church reserves the right of approving, controlling, or correcting the acts and statutes of Provincial Councils. But, anxious to give you a pledge of our zeal for your eternal interests, and of our affection for you, we cannot separate without addressing to you a few words of consolation and encouragement, and imparting to you from our inmost hearts the benediction of the Apostle, "Grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

We address you with the more confidence, being well aware, dearly beloved, of the feelings of reverence and affection with which you respond to our Pastoral care, and knowing that with the instinctive discernment of the sheep mentioned in the Gospel, you recognise in the words which we address to you the accents of the Divine Pastor, uttered by His representatives, and directing you to the pastures of eternal life. You thus prove yourselves to be deeply impressed with that important lesson taught by Our

Lord in His Gospel, that those who hear the words of His Minister with respect and attention reap the same merit as if they had rendered that tribute of honor and obedience to Himself in person. We need scarcely, therefore, exhort you to continue, as you have always done, to listen with respect to your Pastor's words, and to seek lessons of wisdom from his lips. Ignorance of religious duties is the occasion of the ruin of innumerable souls. Of how many may it be said with the Prophet: "Because they had not wisdom, they perished through their folly."—Baruch, ii., 28.

But it is not enough to be diligent in seeking religious instruction for yourselves; you should also be zealous in procuring for your children the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which you so highly appreciate, being careful to imbue their infant minds with the odor of that life-giving name, and to blend its virtues and its sanctity with their entire system of education, domestic and eternal. Of all the duties that bind you to your fellow-creatures, this is the greatest and most responsible. Appointed by Divine Providence the guardians of the souls of your little ones, that have been made to the image of the Living God, and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, the first and most onerous of all your obligations consists in securing their religious training and instruction at all pains and sacrifices. Your children's destiny is not limited to that narrow space which passes between the cradle and the grave; we are but pilgrims and strangers upon this earth, tending to an everlasting home, for which our brief existence here below is but a preparation. If we live religiously here, we shall be eternally happy with God; whilst, if we do not fulfil our duty in this life towards the Creator, we shall be miserable for an entire eternity. Should you not, then, when there is question for the education of your children, keep these maxims continually in your mind, and regulate so important a business with a view not merely to the interests of this world, but also to the concerns of eternity? Should not the sanctification and salvation of their immortal souls be your first and most anxious thought? For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

Though these maxims are clear, and freely admitted by all, yet we find it necessary to repeat and inculcate them, because they are at variance with the spirit of the times in which we live, and are often practically forgotten. The tendency of the world and its votaries is to separate education from religion, to impart the knowledge of this earth and earthly things, and to forget the things of Heaven; to occupy themselves incessantly with matter and all its qualities and modifications, and to forget the care of the souls that are made to the image and likeness of God; to spend their lives in running after and examining the creature that passeth away, and never to devote a moment to the consideration of the great Creator of all things, in whom we live, we move, and have our being. What is still worse, under the pretence of education, errors of the most fatal kind are frequently instilled into the tender minds of youth, who are often infected with the worst principles of rationalism, scepticism, and infidelity, before they are aware of their danger. Almost in every country attempts are now made to poison the fountains of knowledge. Defeated on the ground of reason and revelation, the enemies of religion have directed all their efforts to the seduction of unsuspecting youth; so that it would appear that the great question of the present day is education, and that the school is the battle-ground on which the fate of the rising generation is to be decided.

Under such circumstances, and with all the authority of the Pastor's voice, which should never be absent from his flock, and which should be lifted with peculiar energy in time of trial and danger, we exhort you, dearly beloved, to be most vigilant in preserving your children from the snares that are laid for them, and to be most careful in preserving them from the dangers to which their Faith might be exposed. We are particularly solicitous for the children of the poor, for whose perversion most wicked plans have been devised. Their parents should be most cautious to keep them from those proselytising schools established in great numbers through the country, in which they are provided with food and raiment, on the condition of renouncing the Faith of their Fathers. This vile system of proselytism, which carries on a traffic in the miseries of the poor, and calls on them in the hour of affliction to sacrifice their consciences before relief will be administered, can never be sufficiently execrated. What are its effects? Not to spread Protestantism, but infidelity—not to promote virtue, but vice—not to propagate truth and religion, but lying and hypocrisy. The few unhappy individuals, for they are few—though large sums have been expended by malicious or deluded men in this unworthy traffic—the few unhappy individuals who

have sold their Faith have put off all sense of religion, become hypocrites, and have the shame and degradation of apostasy branded indelibly upon them. From their fruits you will know them. If, then, you value the Faith, the religion, the virtue of your children, preserve them from a system disgraceful in its origin and pernicious in its effects. Of its authors the words of Christ in the Gospel may be understood: "Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you go around about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of Hell twofold worse than yourselves."—Matt., xxiii., 15.

Whilst calling your attention to the wicked system of proselytism by which our poor brethren are assailed, we cannot but caution you, dearly beloved, who, have been endowed by God with the good things of this world, to avoid the example of the unhappy parents, who, having made a god of this world, give to their children an education exclusively adapted to the idol worship to which they have been devoted, making its riches, honors, and pleasures, the sole or primary objects of their aspirations and affections, or only intermingling enough of religion to satisfy the decency of exterior forms. Neither should you be seduced from the path of duty by the conduct and representations of those parents who, after having imparted to their children in early life the benefits of religious training, do not scruple to send them at a more advanced age, the most dangerous period of youth, when the passions are strongest, and temptations most numerous and powerful, to finish their studies in institutions professedly hostile to the tenets of their religion, or intrinsically dangerous to their Faith and morals. The sad fruits of infidelity, immorality, and sedition, which such institutions have borne in every country, and must necessarily continue to bear, proclaim more impressively even than the solemn admonitions of the Church the folly as well as the guilt of those who sacrifice the only bright hopes and true happiness of their children, to an expediency as unprincipled in its motives as it is frequently deceptive in its promises.

The establishment of a Catholic University, so long and ardently desired, and so necessary in a country like ours, where there are so many hostile educational establishments richly endowed at the public expense, and where Catholic education was so long and strictly prohibited, must deprive each person of every pretext for the course they have pursued, furnishing, as it will, to our youth an education as liberal and comprehensive as it will be thoroughly religious in its spirit and principles, and constituting an era in the history of our national Church. An institution so vast in its nature and importance necessarily demanded considerable time to collect the pecuniary funds requisite for the work, and could not be hastily started into existence. Now that the contributions of our own people have been so efficiently seconded by the liberality of the Catholics of England and the noble generosity of our brethren beyond the Atlantic, to all of whom we can never be sufficiently grateful, and that the obstacles which for a time obstructed the agency of the venerated and accomplished scholar who fills its presidential chair have been happily removed, we hope that its doors shall be shortly thrown open, not only to our own students, but to the Catholic youth of those countries which have so cordially and generously assisted in promoting its establishment. Apart from the intrinsic merit and local want of such an institution, the repeated and earnest recommendation of the Supreme Pastor, the slightest intimation, of whose wishes, as Christ's Anointed Vicar upon earth, should be received by us with filial reverence and affection, whose paternal heart throbs with such a profound sympathy for our spiritual wants and interests, and whose love and honored name will be for ever cherished by a grateful people as that of the first amongst their benefactors who consoled and relieved them in the hour of agonising suffering and affliction should inspire us with an invincible zeal, energy, and perseverance in the prosecution and promotion of a work which the wisdom that sits by his throne and assists his councils, and the experience of the entire Christian world, combine in urging as of such vast importance to the interests of religion and literature.

Whilst instructing and exhorting you to provide for the religious education of your children, we need scarcely admonish you of the obligation you are under of exercising the strictest vigilance over the books which are placed in their hands. All books of an irreligious, immoral, and seditious tendency, or calculated in any way to corrupt the heart and mind, are to be carefully avoided. All books to be used in the public schools should be free from every contagion of error, and those which are destined for religious instruction should be approved of by your legitimate Pastors. There are two little works which have been sometimes, though rarely, used by

Catholic children, which we now wish to see banished from their hands. The first is a little treatise on the "Evidences of Christianity," composed by a Protestant dignitary, who has lately distinguished himself by his unprovoked attack on our conventual institutions, under the hypocritical pretence of protecting personal liberty. We need scarcely state that this treatise, coming from the pen of such an author, is Protestant in its principles and tendencies, and that it is not fit for the instruction of Catholic children in the important question of the truth of their religion.

The other work is entitled "Scripture Lessons." It contains most difficult passages from the New and Old Testament, and there are questions proposed at the end of each chapter which would open the way to the teaching of false doctrines, and which the unlearned and unwary might wrest to their own destruction. This little work appears to have been compiled for the purpose of giving a united religious instruction to Catholic and non-Catholic children in the same class. We reprobate such a project. Doubtless if the teacher were a Catholic, he would endeavor to give a Catholic interpretation to the texts of Scripture submitted to him, and Catholic answers to the questions proposed; but a Protestant or Presbyterian would act in the same way, and under them a Catholic child would not be safe. Separate religious instruction, as it was laid down by the statesman who first introduced the National system into Ireland, is the only protection for Catholics. It is contrary to the spirit and practice of our Holy Church to sanction united religious instruction, or to sanction any instruction on matters connected with religion given to Catholics by persons who themselves reject the teaching of the Catholic Church. In addition to the catechetical works, Scriptural histories and extracts already within your reach, and with which our schools abound, it will be our care to provide Scriptural lessons that may be safely placed in the hands of our children which will be adapted to their tender minds, and which will contribute to build up their Faith, instead of undermining it—to foster their piety, instead of exposing it to perish amidst the doubts, difficulties, and conflicting errors that are sure to spring from unauthorised interpretation.

The injunction we now give you to remove the two little works just mentioned from the hands of your children, will be the more easily carried into effect, as the rules of the National Board do not at all require the use of them.

There is another matter connected with schools which is not to be passed over in silence. In the military or regimental schools of this country it has been customary to make Catholic and Protestant children unite in common prayers, or rather to induce Catholic children to join in Protestant prayers. We understand that regulations, drawn up in a more liberal spirit under the present ministry, give full liberty to all engaged in her Majesty's service, and their children, whether in the army or navy, to serve God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and the principles of the religion they profess. Catholic soldiers and sailors are strictly bound to avail themselves of these liberal concessions, and never to consent to assist themselves, or to allow their children to assist, at Protestant prayers, or to take any part in Protestant worship. It is not a narrow spirit of bigotry that animates us in issuing this instruction. We Catholics feel it to be our duty to pray for the spiritual and temporal prosperity and happiness of all mankind. We pray for all with all the fervor of our souls; but we cannot join in prayer, we cannot participate in Divine worship with any except those who hold the same Faith with us, and offer to God the same pure sacrifice which is offered on our altars. Were those who differ from us in religion to understand our doctrines, and to know how fervently we pray for their welfare, they would not offer violence to the consciences of their servants, nor attempt to compel them to take part in prayers of which they cannot approve, and which are not sanctioned by their Church.

Let the answer, then, of the Catholic servant, soldier, or sailor, when attempts are made upon the sacred rights of conscience, whenever pressed to join in prayer, or assist at the religious worship of persons out of his communion, ever be—"My religion teaches me to pray for you, but not with you."

As the Sacraments constitute the necessary and essential means instituted by Jesus Christ, for generating and preserving the life of grace, as, from the pouring of the baptismal water on our head to the unction that fortifies the departing spirit for its last dread combat, the entire economy of our spiritual existence is carried on and sustained by their agency, we cannot sufficiently impress on you the obligations of gratitude you owe to Almighty God for these wonderful works of His love, in which His power, wisdom, and goodness are more strikingly displayed