

THE ROSARY OF MARY.

Important Encyclical of Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII.

The following magnificent document was read in all the Catholic Churches of this Province, and we reproduce it for the benefit of any of our readers who may not have had an opportunity of hearing it read:—

Encyclical Letter of Our Most Holy Lord Leo XIII., by Divine Providence Pope.

To the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Holy See.

Venerable Brethren—Greeting and the Apostolic Benediction.

The holy joy which we experienced at the opening of this fiftieth anniversary of our episcopal consecration was still more agreeably increased when we saw the Catholics of the whole world unite with us, like children with their father, in a common and striking manifestation of faith and love. Penetrated with gratitude, we discover and note in this fact a special design on the part of Divine Providence at once of supreme favor to us and of great blessing for the Church. For this benefit we also feel a desire not less of thanking and extolling the august Mother of the Saviour, our good and powerful mediatrix with God. Always and in every way during the long years and events of our life we have experienced the protection of her maternal and exquisite charity, which continues to manifest itself to us in a manner more and more luminously striking. She pours into our soul a heavenly sweetness and fills it with a confidence quite supernatural. We seem to hear

THE VERY VOICE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN encouraging us in the midst of our crosses, helping us with her counsels in the steps to be taken for the common good of the faithful, urging us to move the Christian people to piety and the practice of all the virtues. Several times in the past it has been a pleasure and a duty to us to respond by our acts to those desires of Mary. Among the happy fruits which, under her auspices, our exhortations have produced it is fitting to point out the great development of the devotion of the Holy Rosary, the new confraternities erected under that name, and the reconstitution of old ones, the learned writings published with that object to the great profit of the faithful, and even certain works of art of remarkable merit and richness inspired by that very thought. To-day urged by the voice of the Blessed Virgin Mother repeating to us "Clama nec cesses"—"Cry out and cease not to cry out." We are happy, venerable brethren, to confer with you anew on the Holy Rosary of Mary at the approach of that month of October which we have consecrated to this touching devotion, enriching it with numerous indulgences and graces. Still, the immediate object of our words at present is not to bestow new praises on that excellent form of prayer, but chiefly to move the faithful to have recourse to it with piety; we wish rather to remind them of certain very valuable advantages flowing from the devotion, and wonderfully appropriate to the present condition of men and things, for we are thoroughly persuaded that from the recitation of the Holy Rosary, practised in a way to produce its full effects, will follow, not only for individuals in particular, but for the whole Christian Republic, the most valuable advantages. There is none who does not know how, in fulfillment of the duty of our Supreme Apostolate, we have striven, as we are ready to do again with the help of God, to labor for the happiness and prosperity of society. Often we have warned those who have the power not to make laws or apply them except in the sense of Divine thought. We have exhorted those whose genius, merits, nobility of blood or fortune have raised them above their fellow citizens, to bring their united intelligence and power to bear in laboring more efficaciously to strengthen and defend the common interests; but in civil society, such as we see it constituted to-day, there are numerous and multiplied causes which weaken the bonds of public order and turn people aside from the way of honesty

and good morals. These causes seem to us to be chiefly the three following: namely,

AVERSION TO AN HUMBLE AND LABORIOUS LIFE,

horror of all that causes suffering, and forgetfulness of future happiness, the object of our hope. We see with sorrow—and even those who only judge everything by the light of human reason and according to utilitarian principles recognize and deplore it along with us—that a deep wound has stricken the social body since we see neglected, and as it were disdained, the duties and virtues which adorn the simple common life. Hence, in effect, at the domestic hearth, that obstinate resistance of children to the obedience which nature itself imposes on them, and that impatience in bearing every yoke, other than that of softness and voluptuousness. Hence in man, condemned to toil, that seeking to withdraw and fly from all painful labor, that profound discontentedness with his lot, that aiming at a higher rank, those thoughtless aspirations after an equal partition of property, and other ambitions of the same kind, which cause people to desert the country to plunge into the tumult and pleasure of large cities. Hence that disturbance of the equilibrium between different classes of society, that universal disquietude, those hatreds and poignant jealousies, those flagrant violations of right—in fine, those unceasing efforts of all the deluded to disturb the public peace by seditions and uprisings, and attack those very people whose mission it is to protect them. Let us ask for a remedy for these evils at the Rosary of Mary, at that co-ordinated recitation of certain formulas of prayers accompanied by pious meditation on the life of the Saviour and His Mother. Let one explain to them in suitable language adapted to the understanding of the simple faithful the joyful mysteries, placing them before their eyes like so many images and pictures of the practice of virtue, and everyone recognize what an admirable and rich mine there is there of easy arguments, capable, by their sweet eloquence, of inculcating good morals and honesty. We are in presence of

THE HOLY HOUSE OF NAZARETH, the dwelling of Divine and earthly sanctity. What perfection of the common life! What a finished model of domestic society! Therein reigns candor and simplicity, perpetual peace, ever perfect order, mutual respect and reciprocal love, not false and deceptive love, but real and active, which by the assiduity of its good offices enraptures the gaze of simple spectators. A provident zeal there provides for all the needs of life, but that, in sudore vultus, "by the sweat of the brow," like those who, knowing how to be content with little, strive less to multiply what they have than to lessen their poverty. Above all, what one admires in this domestic interior is the peace of soul and joy of spirit, the double treasure of the conscience of every good man. Now these great examples of modesty and humility, of good will towards their neighbors, of the perfect fulfilment of private life and all the virtues, cannot be meditated upon nor thus fixed little by little in the memory without their insensibly resulting in a salutary transformation in the thoughts and habits of life. Then the obligations of each one will cease to press upon him and inspire him with disgust; he will like them and will find in their fulfillment a joy which will be a new stimulus to good. Manners will also become gentler, the family life more agreeable and more relaxed, intercourse with one's neighbors more penetrated with sincerity, charity and respect. And if these transformations of the private individual extend to families, cities, peoples and institutions, it will easily be seen what immense advantage will be derived for the whole public benefit. A second extremely lamentable evil, and which we can never sufficiently deplore, because it continually increases from day to day, to the great detriment of souls, is the deliberate desire to shirk pain and employ every means to avoid suffering and repel adversity. For the great majority of men the reward of virtue, fidelity and duty, of labor endured and obstacles surmounted, is no longer, as it should be in peace and liberty of soul: what they pursue, as the height of felicity, is

COMMERCIAL CONDITION OF SOCIETY in which there shall be nothing to be endured, and in which one shall at the

same time enjoy every earthly pleasure. Now it is impossible that souls should not be sullied by this unbridled desire of pleasure; if they do not become its complete victims it always produces such an enervation that when the ills of life make themselves felt they shamefully bend beneath them, and end by miserably succumbing to them. Here, again, it is permissible to hope that by force of example the devotion of the Holy Rosary will give souls more strength and energy; and why should it be otherwise when the Christian, from his tenderest childhood, and constantly ever since, has applied his mind with silence and recollection to the sweet contemplation of the mysteries called sorrowful. In these mysteries we learn that Jesus Christ, "the Author and Finisher of Our Faith," began simultaneously to work and preach, in order that we should find in Him, reduced to practice, what He had to teach us touching patience and courage in sorrow and suffering to the extent of being willing Himself to endure all that could be most crucifying and painful to bear. We see Him overwhelmed under the weight of a sorrow which, compressing the vessels of the heart, caused Him to sweat blood. We contemplate Him bound like a malefactor, submitting to the judgment of the wicked, insulted, calumnyed, falsely accused of crimes, beaten with rods, adjudged unworthy to live, and deserving that the crowd should clamor for His death. To all that we add meditations on the sorrows of His Most Holy Mother, whose heart a sharp sword has not only wounded, but transpierced through and through, so that she became, and merited to be called, the Mother of Sorrows. How should not everyone who will frequently contemplate, not only with the eyes of the body, but in thought and meditation, such great examples of strength and virtue, burn with the desire of imitating them! Let the earth appear to him

STRICKEN WITH MALEDICTIONS and only producing thorns and briars; let his soul be oppressed with pain and anguish, his body undermined by disease, no suffering will reach him, either from the wickedness of man or the anger of the demons; no adversity, public or private, which his patience will not finally overcome. Hence the proverb: *facere et pati fortia Christianum est*—to act and suffer is the attribute of the Christian—for whosoever wishes to have a right to that name cannot do without following Jesus in patience. But when we speak of patience we by no means mean that vain ostentation of a soul hardened against sorrow, which was the characteristic of certain philosophers of antiquity, but that patience modeled upon Him who, having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame"—*proposito sibi gaudio sustinuit crucem confusione contempna* (Hebrew xii., 2). We mean that patience which, after having asked of God the succor of His grace, rejects no suffering, but rejoices at it, and, whatever it may be, considers it as a gain. The Catholic Church has always had, and at present counts, and in all places, illustrious disciples of this doctrine, men and pious women of every rank who, to walk in the footsteps of the Lord, bear with courage and in a spirit of religion all kinds of insults and crosses, saying still more by their acts than words with the Apostle St. Thomas: *Eamus et nos et moriamur cum eo*—"Let us also go that we may die with Him" (John xi., 16). May it please God to multiply more and more these examples of remarkable constancy! They are a support to civil society, and the glory and strength of the Church. The third kind of evils to which it is necessary to apply a remedy is specially characteristic of men of our time. Those of former ages, even though they sometimes loved more passionately the things of earth, did not, however, absolutely disdain Heavenly things; thus to the pagan sages themselves this life seemed like a guest house and a temporary abode rather than a fixed and lasting dwelling. Men of our days, on the contrary, although nurtured in Christianity, pursue

THE PERISHABLE GOODS OF THE PRESENT LIFE

in such a way that they would like not only to forget, but through an excess of abasement even efface the memory of a better land in eternal happiness, as if St. Paul had warned us in vain that we had not here a lasting dwelling place, but that we seek one to come—"non

habemus hic manentem civitatem sed futuram inquirimus" (Hebrews, xii., 14). If we examine into the causes of this aberration, the first which presents itself is the persuasion of a great number that the preoccupation of future things extinguishes the love of the earthly fatherland and is detrimental to the prosperity of the state.

AN ODIOUS AND MAD CALUMNY.

As a matter of fact, the goods we hope for are not of a nature to absorb men's thoughts to the extent of diverting them from the care of present things. Jesus Christ Himself in recommending us to seek first the Kingdom of God, has thereby intimated that it should not make us neglect the rest. In fact, the use of present things and the honest enjoyment they afford when virtue finds a stimulus or a reward therein, as also the adornment and embellishment of the terrestrial city, when we see therein an image of the splendor and magnificence of the Heavenly city, presents nothing contrary to human reason or the Divine counsels; for God is the author at once of nature and of grace and has not willed that one should injure the other nor should be mutually antagonistic, but that, united by a fraternal alliance, they should both lead us easily to that immortal beatitude for which we mortal men have come into the world. However, the voluptuous and self-lovers, those thoughts wander to lower and perishable things to such a degree that it becomes impossible for them to rise higher, those who rather than feel awakened in them by the enjoyment of visible creatures, the desire of invisible and eternal things, completely lose sight of eternity itself and fall even to the lowest degree of the deepest debasement.

GOD COULD NOT INFLICT A MORE TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT

on man than letting him forget superior things to pass his life in the enjoyment of lower pleasures. Now, the Christian, who, the pious Rosary in hand, will often meditate on the glorious mysteries, can certainly never be exposed to such a danger. From these mysteries in fact, comes a light which reveals to us those Heavenly treasures and beauties which our corporal eyes cannot perceive but which we know by faith to be prepared for those who love God. We there learn that death is not a destruction which leaves nothing behind it, but a passage from one life to another, and that the way to Heaven is open to all. When we there see Jesus Christ ascend we recall His promise of preparing a place for us—*vado parare vobis locum*. The Holy Rosary reminds us that there will be a time when God will wipe away all tears from our eyes, when there will be no more mourning nor groaning, nor any sorrow, when we shall be forever with the Lord, like to God because we shall see Him as He is, inebriated with the torrent of His delights, fellow-citizens of the saints and consequently of the Blessed Virgin, our Mother. How should not a soul nourished with such thoughts feel itself burn with a great saint: "How vile the earth seems to me when I look up to Heaven"—*quam sordet terra dum celum aspicio*? How should we not be consoled in thinking that a light momentary tribulation produces in us an eternal weight of glory—*Momentaneum neum et leve tribulationis nostre eternum glorie pondus operatur in nobis*. In truth there alone is the secret of uniting, as in a fitting manner, time and eternity, the earthly and the Heavenly city, and forming noble characters. If these characters are the greater number, it will be safe-guarded in its dignity and greatness; we will see the good, the true and the beautiful, like unto Him Who is the principle and inexhaustive source of all truth, goodness and beauty, flourish therein. And now, as we have observed in commencing, who does not see how grand and fruitful is the salutary virtue of

THE HOLY ROSARY OF MARY,

and what admirable remedies existing society can derive therefrom to cure its ills and prevent their return? But those naturally experience the benefits of this virtue in most abundance who, having joined some of the pious confraternities of the Rosary, shall have acquired a new and particular title, thanks to that fraternal union and their special consecration to the cultus of the most Holy Virgin. These confraternities, approved by the Roman Pontiffs and enriched by them with privileges and indulgences,