

THE EASTERN CHURCHES.

Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII

The following Encyclical, in which his Holiness Leo XIII. earnestly recommends the work of the Propagation of the Faith to all Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops of the world, bears date Rome, December 24th, 1894:—To Our Venerable Brethren, all Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic World, in Grace and Communion with the Apostolic See, Pope Leo XIII: Venerable Brethren Health and Apostolic Benediction.—To bring the name of Christ to the Peoples of the earth and to daily extend his Kingdom more and more amongst all nations, to draw into the fold of the Church both those who have always been separated from it and those who have become hostile to its teachings, this, everyone understands, is beyond question, one of most sacred of the duties of the sublime charge entrusted to Us. Consequently, acting under inspiration of Apostolic charity, We have now for a long time made it the object of Our solicitous thought. We have never ceased to regard with favour and to multiply the Holy Missions which shed the light of Christianity amongst people when wandering in the night of error. We did so, especially by Our Encyclical *sancta Dei Civitas*, given in the third year of Our Pontificate, the one aim of which was to increase the love and generosity of Catholics for the illustrious work of the Propagation of the Faith. In the Encyclical just mentioned We were pleased to exalt by Our heartfelt recommendations a work of which the modest beginnings were followed by developments at once rapid and wonderful, which Our illustrious predecessors, Pius VII. Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, and Pius IX, had covered with praise and spiritual favours, a work, in fine, which gives to the missions of the entire world such efficacious aid, and which promised still more abundant help for the future. Our words have, thank God, had the most happy result. The generosity of the faithful responded to the earnest appeal of the Bishops, and during the last few years the work of the Propagation of the Faith has made numerous strides. To-day, however, more urgent needs demand from Catholics an increase of zeal and generosity, and from you, Venerable Brethren, all your activity.

As you are already aware, from Our Apostolic Letter *Præclara*, published last June, We believe We are but carrying out the will of Divine Providence, in again and again calling the people of the whole world to the unity of Christian faith. It would be the fullest realisation of Our vows if it should be given to Us to hasten the arrival of the time promised by God when "There will be but one fold and one Shepherd." Our Apostolic letters on the necessity for preserving and defending the discipline of the Eastern Churches have led you to understand, venerable brethren, with what special love Our thoughts turn to the East and its illustrious and venerable Churches. You are further aware of this affection by the position which We have taken up after Our conference with the Patriarchs of these nations. At the same time We are far from concealing from Ourselves the difficulties in the way of this design, and Our own powerlessness to overcome them. It is why we have with unbounded confidence placed all Our hope and the success of Our efforts in God. His wisdom it was which inspired Us with the thought and inaugurated its realisation; His sovereign bounty will assuredly furnish the strength and the means to fully accomplish it. Our earnest prayer ceaselessly implores Him to grant this grace, and We at once exhort the faithful to join their

applications to Ours. It is none the less necessary to supplement the help from on High, which We confidently solicit, by human aid, and We shall, as far as in Us lies, leave nothing undone to seek and point out all the means necessary to obtain the desired result.

To bring back to the one true fold all the Eastern Churches separated from it nothing is more essential at the outset, as you, venerable brethren, well know, than to recruit from amongst the Easterns themselves a numerous clergy recommended by doctrine and sanctity, and capable of inspiring others with a desire for reunion. In the second place to establish as many institutions as possible in which Catholic science and discipline should be harmonized with the peculiar genius of the nation. It is, therefore, very opportune to establish, whenever advantageous, special houses for the educational of clerical youths, and colleges proportioned in number to the importance of the population, in order that every ceremony can be performed with dignity, and that by the diffusion of their best books all the faithful may be instructed in the knowledge of their national religion. The realisation of these and cognate projects will involve, as you readily understand great expense, which the Oriental Churches, as you can also believe, are unable to meet by themselves, and it is not possible for Us, in view of the difficulties of Our actual position, to subscribe thereto as liberally as We should desire. It remains, therefore, to make an appeal within the limits of moderation for the greatest share of these necessary outlays for the prosecution of the work which We have just outlined, and the aim of which coincides exactly with that which is nearest to our heart. However, in order not to injure in any way the Apostolic missions by encroaching on any share of their resources, the faithful cannot be too often impressed with the necessity for enlarging their donations in view of our needs. It is only fair to recommend also the similar work of the *Ecoles d'Orient*, the directors of which have also undertaken to apply the greatest portion of the alms which they receive to the same object.

For all these reasons, Venerable Brethren, We make a special claim on your co-operation, not doubting that you, who have with so constant a zeal aided Us and worked for the promotion by every means of the cause of religion and the Church, will now give Us effective aid. Do everything in your power, therefore, to advance amongst the faithful entrusted to your charge the Association of the Propagation of the Faith. We are, in fact, certain that a much larger number of the faithful would gladly give their names and according to their means generally subscribe, if from your instructions they understood clearly how noble a work is this, how abundant are the spiritual graces attached to it, and what advantages the cause of Christianity may in the present day legitimately hope from it. And certainly Catholics will be profoundly touched when they learn that nothing could be more agreeable to Us or more useful to the Church than that they should zealously vie with one another in collecting the necessary resources for bringing to a successful issue the projects we have formed for the good of the Eastern Churches. May God, whose glory is only concerned in the diffusion of the Christian name and the unity of the Faith and spiritual government, design in His goodness to bless your desires, to look with favour on Our undertaking, and as a pledge of the most precious Heavenly favours We grant in all affection Our Apostolic Benediction to you, Venerable Brethren to your clergy and your people.

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