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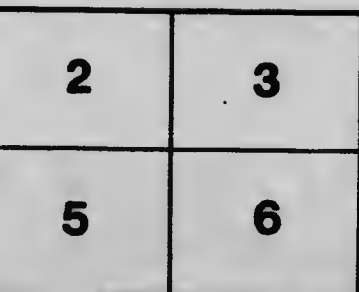
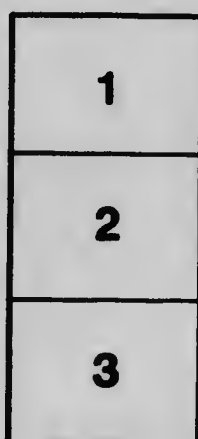
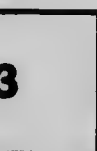
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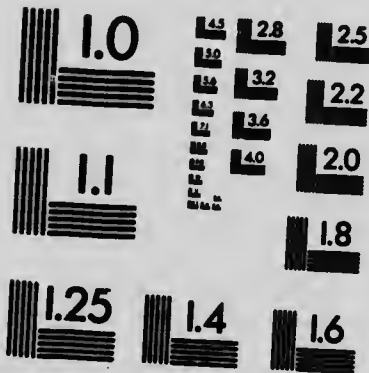
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INSTRUCTIONS
OF
HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF MONTREAL
TO HIS CLERGY
REGARDING
MIXED MARRIAGES

Dear Co-Workers,

It is with great sorrow that we witness among the Catholics of our diocese an ever-increasing tendency to mixed marriages. In the past few years, we have sometimes deemed it our duty to yield to the solicitations made, and to grant, though reluctantly, the required dispensations. But these requests are daily becoming more numerous and the time has now come for energetic reactionary measures; the evil must be removed at all costs before it is too late. This is a question, which eminently concerns the faith of our flock, and for this reason, I now appeal to all the earnestness of your apostolic zeal.

In this, it is not by any means our intention to hurt the feelings of those who do not share our belief. But their religious principles, as they well know, are essentially opposed to ours; therefore they must not wonder if our legislation, our direction and our way of acting differ from theirs. When we preach tolerance, nay kindness and charity towards all our brethren, to whatever sect they may belong, we remain and must remain intransigent, when there is question of doctrine. For truth is one, it does not suffer any compromise with error. The good faith of others deserves our respect, but it cannot however change that which God has established. There is but one Church; our duty is to observe its laws and to have them observed. We do not impose our dogmas upon others, and no one can reproach us for being inconsistent.

when we enact rules destined to prevent the weakening and loss of that faith which should be dearer to us than life itself.

Far be it from us likewise, that we should grieve those who are already united by the bonds of a mixed marriage, and who, not satisfied with the fulfilment of their strict obligations as Catholics, devotedly exercise in their home the duties of a true apostolate. Unions such as we now denounce, may have sometimes procured God's glory and the conquest of a few souls ; but these are very rare exceptions. Unhappy results are by far more frequent, and therefore, we are confident of protecting the dearest interests of all those whom the Lord has intrusted to our care, when we dissuade them from those unions so formally, and so frequently censured by Holy Mother Church.

You will help us, dear Co-Workers, in this very important work, by your preaching, your advice, your wise direction to the families and young people confided to your pastoral care. We would repeat to you with St. Paul the Apostle : " Preach the word : be instant in season, out of season : reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine " (1).

Is it necessary to quote the documents of the Sovereign Pontiffs on this momentous subject ? Benedict XIV bewails the fate of those benighted Catholics who do not abhor those unions which have, at all times, been condemned, whilst he praises the pastors who make it their duty to resist them by every means in their power (2).

Pius IX, in a famous instruction, speaks with no less energy against such marriages which so much endanger the faith of the catholic party and still more the religious education of the children (3).

(1) II Tim., ch. iv, v. 2.

(2) Instruction for Holland, Nov. 4th, 1741.

(3) Instruction of Nov. 15th 1858.



The Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, our direct interpreter of the wishes of the Holy See, has written many times to the Bishops of this country to urge them to stop the ever-increasing plague of mixed marriages.

So did the first Council of Montreal lay special stress upon these teachings, cautioning the faithful against such unions (4).

When for very serious reasons, the Church tolerates such a marriage, she does so with the deepest regret. Its celebration cannot take place within the church, all blessings, acts of worship or religious ceremonies are banished from it. It is reduced to a cold formula — the strict essentials — by which the parties express mutual consent. The Church wishes to participate in this ceremony in the least possible degree, and the priest assists only as a sad and silent witness.

But why then does the Church display such severity? It is because she fully understands the deplorable consequences of mixed marriages; it is because she regards them as detrimental to the domestic happiness and to the eternal salvation of both parents and children.

For marriage by its very nature establishes between husband and wife the most intimate relations. According to the words of Holy Writ, it unites them in such a way that they "are but one". Now what intimacy can there exist between two beings who have neither the same ideas nor the same feelings on the fundamental questions of religion—who never pray together, who go to different churches, who have contradictory practices even in sickness and in death? In such a household, by common agreement, absolute silence is kept on everything which is connected with the teachings or discipline of the Church; and then religious indifference, with its pernicious influence, will soon pervade the home, or there will

(4) Tit. vi, Decret. XVII.

arise endless discussions, and troublesome controversies out of which catholic faith will not always issue victorious. That faith, at first, so strong and firm, will run great risks of becoming gradually weaker, and perhaps will end in a complete wreck. Statistics gathered on this subject, in other countries rather than in our own, reveal to us the most painful defections. Nay, do we not see in our midst a repetition of what has happened elsewhere ? Besides, one must not forget that mixed unions bring about social intercourse and give rise, on many occasions, to extremely delicate situations, in which catholic convictions are much exposed to vary. Thus, in many cases, will not the catholic wife, through human respect or a desire to please, weakly sacrifice the principles and practices of her religion ?

But this is not all : there are the children, and it is for the children above all that the Church is particularly anxious, it is concerning them that her motherly solicitude is justly alarmed.

Undoubtedly she lays down as an essential condition of the dispensations she grants, that all the children born of a mixed marriage must be baptized and educated in the catholic religion. The non-catholic party solemnly makes the required promise ; but is this promise always kept ? Alas ! numerous facts oblige us to answer in the negative ; and it is not necessary to seek very far for them, we have but to cast our eyes around us : it is a misfortune we cannot too loudly deplore.

Have we not often heard the expression of this idea or the proposal of this strange compromise : that the daughters will practice their mother's religion, but the sons must adhere to their father's belief ? What an inconceivable error ! As if there were two Gospels, two Creeds, two Churches, according to the sex of the children ? Let us bear in mind that this idea is inherent among many non-catholics, and no matter

what promises are made on the occasion of a marriage, we can easily apprehend disastrous consequences.

Now, let us suppose even the greatest good-will on the one side, and on the other the energetic determination to be faithful to all sacred duties, the education of the children is nevertheless much exposed. For the success of this work, so difficult and so delicate, the united efforts of the father and mother are assuredly needed. Now, in a mixed marriage, the catholic party — the mother generally — far from being aided and seconded by her husband, will have against her, in most cases, to say the least, his passive influence. In fact, what zeal can a protestant father be expected to show in educating his son in a religion which he disdains or at least which he does not accept.

Should a mother die leaving very young children, what will become of these poor little ones ? Do we verily believe that the father will take every means necessary to have them brought up in the faith of their baptism ? Sad experience once more answers the question negatively.

But let us lay aside this mournful hypothesis, and suppose the father and the mother to be living with sons and daughters growing up under their care. When these children have reached the age of discretion, they can understand, compare and judge. They will then quickly note the contradiction which exists between the religious acts of their father and mother. They love both equally. But which of the two is in possession of the truth ? Whom must they follow and imitate ? What their mother proposes to them as a holy obligation or as a venerable practice is perhaps neglected, ridiculed and despised by the father. One religion seems broader and easier than the other ; it demands neither assistance at mass nor abstinence on Fridays ; neither fast nor confession ; it does not speak of rosaries, scapulars, nor of hard

observances ; and nevertheless, it prevents no one from being good, honest and generous — why not embrace it ? In the course of time, what must not be the effect of these reflections on the mind and the heart of a young girl, of a young man especially ! He will end by adopting the religion of his father — an apostasy which the world will try to justify by invoking liberty of conscience.

These are not, as you know, dear Co-Workers, imaginary suppositions, but rather sad realities. Can we, in presence of such a spectacle, remain indifferent, — we who have charge of souls, — we who have received the mission to teach and uphold the truth ?

But it is not sufficient for us to show the many drawbacks of mixed marriages : we must forestall them in their causes, and for this reason it is necessary to warn parents of the duty which rests upon them and to urge them to watch over the social relations of their children.

We are aware that our present social conditions bring us necessarily into contact with persons ignorant of our faith. But is not this contact in certain circles too frequent and too intimate ? Are there not many who seem to seek it without thinking of the consequences it may have upon the young ? Are not the admonitions given by our regretted predecessor, Archbishop Fabre, a few years ago, more opportune than ever ? " If the Catholics, he said, are not careful in the intercourse which the use of a common language may sometimes introduce, it will be impossible to prevent frequent visits that end in projects of marriage. Catholics who understand their duty and their responsibility towards their children, must therefore be vigilant and cut the evil in its root by never favoring these too intimate relations with Protestants. If they do not prevent this in the beginning, they will have to repent

later on and will carry before God the burden of their negligence in such a grave matter (5).

Yes, dear Co-Workers, insist particularly on this capital point, in your instructions and advice to mothers. Let them forbid their young daughters to enter into these relations of which we have just spoken, and let them oppose all such at the very beginning. After frequent visits, company-keeping, tolerated for months and years, of what avail will their advice and reprimands be? When once the heart is strongly attached, no argument can change the decision taken.

To the exhortations delivered from the pulpit, you will add those given in the holy Tribunal of Penance. When you meet any one who is tempted to contract a mixed marriage, make him understand his error and the dangers he is incurring. Use at first all the means suggested by persuasion and mildness, then even defer absolution, should you deem it an efficient way of overcoming his obstinacy.

Act in the same manner with parents who do not watch sufficiently over their daughters, and who allow them to associate too freely with non-catholic young men.

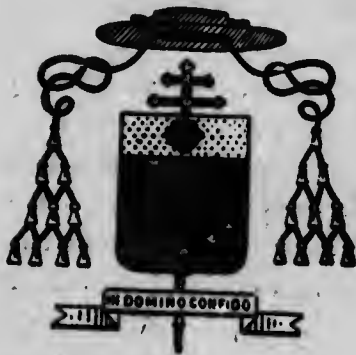
Tell your parishioners, in our name, that we will no longer grant dispensations for mixed marriages, as we have done in the past. They cannot in future expect to obtain these dispensations, even though they bring forward the weighty reasons of temporal advantage or mutual affection, even though they threaten to seek the services of a minister of another religion.

We would also remind you that there is excommunication against every Catholic who attempts to be married by a protestant minister; and that, in our diocese, the right to absolve such a fault is reserved to Ourselves and to our Vicar-General.

In order to attain more surely our aim in this matter, we desire this letter to be read in every church and public chapel of our diocese. You are at liberty to explain it more fully. You will also be prompted by its contents to remind your flock, at least twice a year, of their duties on this important subject. The Reverend Chaplains of Convents will likewise find in this communication subject-matter for the advice and instruction which they administer to the young girls whose spiritual direction is intrusted to their care.

Should we, through our united efforts, succeed in banishing from our families all ideas of these unions, the evil effects of which we have just recalled, we will feel that we have accomplished a beneficial work and we will render most heartfelt thanks to Our Divine Lord.

Given at Montreal under our hand and seal and the counter-signature of our Chancellor, the twelfth day of November, one thousand nine hundred and seven.



PAUL, ARCH. OF MONTREAL,

By order of His Grace,

EMILE ROY,

Canon Chancellor.



