

ADK 9952

Pius XI

— Non abbiamo bisogno: On Catholic
Action in Italy. 1931. —

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Concerning Catholic Action
The Conflict in Italy
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Encyclical Letter
(Non abbiamo bisogno)

of

His Holiness, Pope Pius XI

(Vatican Press Translation)

Issued June 29, 1931

(Seventh Printing)



NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.

WASHINGTON 5, D. C.

ENCYCLICAL
OF
POPE PIUS XI
CONCERNING
CATHOLIC ACTION

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NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

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ENCYCLICAL LETTER

TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHREN

PATRIARCHS PRIMATES ARCHBISHOPS BISHOPS

AND OTHER ORDINARIES

IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE

CONCERNING

CATHOLIC ACTION

POPE PIUS XI

VENERABLE BRETHREN

HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION

WE MUST needs speak to you, Venerable Brethren, about events which have recently occurred in this, Our Episcopal City of Rome, and throughout Italy, that is to say, in the very territory of which We are Primate—events which have had such a vast and such a strong repercussion everywhere, conspicuously so in all of the dioceses of Italy and throughout the Catholic World.

These occurrences are summarized in a very few and very sad words. There has been an attempt made to strike unto death that which was and that which always will be dearest to Our heart as Father and as Shepherd of Souls; and We can, We even must, subjoin “and the way in which it was done offends Us still more.”

And it is in the presence of these events, and constrained by them, that We feel the necessity and the duty of turning to you, Venerable Brethren, and, in a certain manner, going in spirit to each one of you, for the purpose of fulfilling first of all a grave and an urgent duty of fraternal gratitude. And We turn to you in the second place to satisfy another duty equally grave and urgent, the duty to defend Truth and Justice in a matter which, affecting vital interests and rights of Holy Mother Church, concerns each and every one of you, Venerable Brethren, whom the

Holy Ghost has called to govern the Church in union with Ourselves. We desire, thirdly, to explain to you certain conclusions and reflections that the nature of events seems to oblige Us to accept. Fourthly, We wish to tell you of Our anxieties for the future, and finally, We invite you to share Our hopes, and to pray with Us and with the Catholic world that these hopes may be realized.

ONE

The interior peace—that peace which comes to any one with full and clear knowledge that one is arrayed on the side of Truth and Justice and that one is striving and suffering for these virtues—that peace which only God can give and which the world, in the same way that it cannot give, neither can it take away—that blessed and consoling peace has never left Us, thanks to Divine goodness and mercy; and We have fullest confidence that, come what may, it will never leave Us.

But the possession of this peace—and this was verified in the Heart of Our suffering Saviour and is also verified in the hearts of His faithful followers—does not prevent the torment of bitterness, as well you know, Venerable Brethren, and We also have experienced the truth of those mysterious words: “Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter.” (Isaias 38:17).

Your prompt, generous and affectionate cooperation, which still continues, Venerable Brethren; the fraternal, and filial expressions of devotion which you have uttered; and above everything else that feeling of high supernatural solidarity of purpose, that intimate union of thoughts and of feelings, of intellects and wills which your messages of affection breathe forth and radiate, have filled Our soul with an indescribable consolation and have called forth from Our heart to Our lips the words of the Psalmist: “According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul,” (Ps. 93:19).

For all these consolations and comforts, after God, We thank you, Venerable Brethren, you to whom We also can say as Jesus Christ said to your predecessors, the Apostles:

“And you are they who have continued with me in my temptations,” (Luke, 22:28).

And in expressing Our gratitude to you, We wish also to perform the duty, most consoling to Our paternal heart, of thanking hosts of good and worthy children who, separately and collectively, as individuals and as members of various organizations and associations, and especially the associations of Catholic Action and of Catholic Youth, have sent Us so many and such affectionate tributes of devotion and sympathy, and of generous and effective correspondence with Our directions and Our desires.

It has been for Us an exquisite satisfaction to see the Catholic Action organizations of all countries, both near and distant, united about the Common Father, inspired by an unique spirit of faith, of filial sorrow and of generous impulses, expressing all their astonishment and grief in seeing Catholic Action societies persecuted and assailed here in the very centre of the Apostolic Hierarchy, in Italy, where, as in all parts of the world, Catholic Action was existing, and did not wish to exist otherwise, nor could have existed otherwise, than in accordance with its authentic and essential definition—as the participation and the collaboration of the laity with the Apostolic Hierarchy.

This was what Catholic Action societies were actually doing in strict accordance with its definition and under Our painstaking and vigilant direction and with the helpful cooperation of yourselves, Venerable Brethren.

We ask you, Venerable Brethren, to convey an expression of Our paternal appreciation to all of your and Our children in Christ who have shown themselves to be so well brought up and to be so good and so sympathetic toward the Common Father of all the faithful so as to inspire Us to exclaim: “I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.” (Cor. 2:7:4).

And to you Bishops of each and every diocese in this dear Italy must go not only the expression of Our gratitude for the comforts with which you have vied with one another in giving Us by your letters, which have been arriving during the entire month just finishing, and especially by your telegrams so eloquent and so affectionate for the feast day of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul; but

there must go also an exchange of condolences for that which each one of you has suffered in seeing a devastating storm sweep suddenly down on the spiritual garden of souls which the Holy Ghost has entrusted to your care, and injure and uproot the plants and the tender flowers which grow in God's garden and which you had with so much diligence been carefully nurturing and cultivating. Your hearts, Venerable Brethren, have immediately turned to Our own, to suffer with Us in our afflictions, and you perceived that Our heart was as a centre in which all of your suffering hearts met and converged and joined. You have manifested this sentiment to Us in clear, unmistakable and affectionate ways, and for these evidences We thank you all, from the depths of Our heart. Particularly appreciative are We of the unanimous and most satisfactory and convincing proofs which you have brought to Us concerning Italian Catholic Action societies, and particularly regarding Catholic Youth associations, affording demonstrations that these organizations have remained docile and faithful to your and to Our instructions in refraining absolutely from any and every kind of political party activity. And together with you, We express Our thanks to all your priests, members of religious communities and the laity, who have labored with you with such magnificent zeal, such exemplary faith and such Christian piety. And in a special way We thank your Catholic associations, chiefly the organizations of the young, down through all their groups even to the smallest boys and girls, for the smaller they are the dearer they are and it is in their prayers that We confidently repose Our trust.

You have understood well, Venerable Brethren, that Our heart was and is with you, with each one of you, with you and for you in sufferings, with you and for you in prayers, beseeching God in His infinite mercy to come to Our assistance, and from this great evil which the ancient enemy of good has unloosed, to draw new blessings and great blessings.

Two

Having satisfied the debt of gratitude for the comforts which We have received in our affliction, We must now

satisfy also that obligation which Our apostolic ministry imposes on Us as a debt to Truth and Justice.

Already on several occasions, Venerable Brethren, in the most solemn and explicit manner and assuming entire responsibility for what We were saying, we have protested against the campaign of false and unjust accusations which preceded the disbanding of the associations of the young people and of the university students affiliated with Catholic Action. It was a disbanding which was carried out in a way and with the use of tactics which would give the impression that action was being taken against a vast and dangerous organization of criminals. And the proceedings were directed against young men and young women who are certainly some of the best among the good and concerning whom We are happy and paternally proud to pay them tribute still once more. It is noteworthy that even among the officers of the law charged to carry out these orders of suppression, there were many who were ill at ease and showed by their expressions and courtesies that they were almost asking pardon for doing that which they had been commanded. We have appreciated the delicate feelings of these officers, and We have reserved for them a special blessing.

However, in sad contrast to the manner of acting of these officials, there were how many acts of mistreatment and of violence, extending even to the striking of blows and the drawing of blood! How many insults in the press, how many injurious words and acts against things and persons, not excluding Ourselves, preceded, accompanied and followed the carrying into effect of this lightning-like police order which very frequently, either through ignorance or malicious zeal, was extended to include associations and organizations not contemplated in the orders of the superiors, such as the oratories of the little ones and the sodalities of the Children of Mary. And all of this sad accompaniment of irreverences and of violences took place in the presence of and with the participation of members of a political party some of whom were in uniform, and was carried into effect with such a unison of action throughout all Italy and with such a passive acquiescence on the part of the civil authorities and the police as to

make one necessarily think of some uniform directions received from some high authority. It is very easy to admit, and it was also equally easy to have foreseen, that the limits of these directions could and would have almost necessarily been exceeded. We have been obliged to refer to these sorrowful and painful occurrences because there has been an attempt made to have the public and the world at large believe that the disbanding of these associations so dear to Us took place without any troubles and almost as if it were quite a normal occurrence.

But there have been other attacks on truth and justice on a larger scale. Of all the inventions, falsehoods and real calumnies diffused by the hostile press of the party, which is the only press which is free to say and to dare to say anything and is often ordered, or almost ordered, what it must say, there was certainly a large portion of these fabrications, if not all of them, summarized in a message which was cautiously characterized as unofficial and yet which was administered to the general public with the most powerful means of diffusion existing at present. The history of documents prepared not in the service of Truth but in offense of Truth and Justice is a long and sad story. But We must say, with a certain deep dismay, that in Our many years of active life as a librarian, rarely have We seen an article so tendentious and so contrary to Truth and Justice in its references to this Holy See, to Italian Catholic Action, and particularly to the associations so harshly treated. If We should be silent, if We should not contradict these things—that is to say, if We should permit them to be believed—We would be too much more unworthy than We already are to occupy this august Apostolic Chair. We should be unworthy of the filial and generous devotion which has always consoled Us and now more than ever consoles Us, that devotion of Our dear children of Catholic Action, and especially of those dear sons and dear daughters—and thanks be to God they are so numerous—who because of religious loyalty to Our invitations and directions, have suffered so much and are still suffering, thereby the more greatly honoring the school in which they have been reared and honoring also their Divine Master and His

unworthy Vicar as they have so gloriously demonstrated by their Christian conduct even in the face of threats and violence so that it is clear on what side real dignity of character, true strength of mind, real courage and education, are displayed.

We shall try to be as brief as possible in correcting the careless assertions of the above-mentioned message—and We say “careless” in order not to be obliged to say “bold,” because it could be imagined that the majority of the public would have no possibility of controlling its accuracy.

We shall be brief also because many times, especially recently, We have spoken on questions that now come up again and Our words have reached you, Venerable Brethren, and through you they have reached also Our dear children in Jesus Christ as We trust also Our words will reach them in this present letter.

Among other things the above-mentioned message stated was that the revelations of the hostile press of the party had been almost completely confirmed, at least in substance, and confirmed no less than by the *Osservatore Romano*. The truth is that the *Osservatore Romano* has, time and time again, demonstrated that the so-called revelations were either actual fabrications or at least false in the interpretation given to facts. It is sufficient to read without bad faith and with a modest capacity to understand.

The message further stated that it was ridiculous to try to make the Holy See appear as a victim in a country where thousands of travelers could give testimony of the respect shown toward priests, prelates, the Church and religious functions. Yes, Venerable Brethren, the attempt unfortunately would be ridiculous, just as it would be ridiculous to break through an open door; because, unfortunately, thousands of visitors who are always present in Italy and in Rome have observed the irreverences, oftentimes of an impious and blasphemous character and the acts of violence and vandalism committed against places, things and persons throughout the country and in Our very Episcopal City, and which have been re-

peatedly deplored by Us after We had had sure and precise information about them.

The message denounces the "black ingratitude" of the priests who are against the party which has been (so the message says) the guarantee of religious liberty throughout all Italy. The clergy, and the bishops and this Holy See have never failed to acknowledge everything that has been done during all these years for the benefit and advantage of religion, and they have on many occasions expressed their genuine and sincere appreciation. But We and the bishops and the clergy and all the faithful—in fact, all citizens desirous of peace and order—have worried and suffered and are worrying and suffering in the presence of a systematic campaign all too quickly begun against the most reasonable and precious liberties of religion and of consciences, such as were the attacks on Catholic Action and its different associations, especially those of the young—attacks which had their culmination in the police measures taken against these organizations and in the manner to which We have already alluded, attacks and measures such as to lead one seriously to doubt that the former benevolences and favors were actuated by a sincere love and zeal for religion, and rather incline to the opinion that they were due to pure calculation and with the intention of solidifying power. And if the question of ingratitude should be considered, it should be rather that ingratitude used toward the Holy See by a party and by a regime that, in the opinion of the whole world, from the fact of establishing friendly relations with the Holy See, both in the country and outside of it, gained a prestige and a credit which some people in Italy and outside of it considered excessive as they deemed the favor on Our part too great and the truth and confidence which We reposed too full.

The police measures having been put into effect with their accompaniment and consequence of acts of violence and of irreverence—acts which were unfortunately acquiesced in and connived at by the authorities of public order—We suspended the mission of our Cardinal Legate to the centenary celebration in Padua, and the festive processions in Rome and in Italy. Such a disposition was

patently within Our competence, and We saw in this measure such grave and urgent reasons for so proceeding that it became a duty, although We were aware that this action would require heavy sacrifices on the part of the good people and perhaps a greater pain to Ourselves than to any other. But how could the usual joyful and solemn festivals be held in the midst of such grief and sorrow as that which had struck the paternal heart of the common Father of all the faithful and the maternal heart of Holy Mother Church, in Rome, in Italy, in all the catholic world, in fact, as became immediately demonstrated by the universal and truly world-wide participation that occurred with you at the head, Venerable Brethren, to assure Us of the general sadness and sympathy. O, how could We not fear for the respect and the safety of persons and of things most sacred, when We were obliged to take into consideration the attitude of public authorities and officers of the law in the presence of so many irreverent and violent acts! Wherever news of Our decisions arrived, the good priests and people had the identical ideas and the same sentiments, and wherever they were not intimidated, threatened or worse, they gave magnificent—and for Us most consoling—proofs of loyalty and grief by substituting for the *festina* observances holy hours of prayer, adoration and of reparation in union with the sorrowing heart of the Holy Father and for his intention and in great gatherings of the people.

We know how things proceeded in those places where Our instruction did not, “because of the action of the authorities,” as the message reveals, arrive in time. Those selfsame authorities of government and of party had already assisted, or were about to assist, silently and inactively, in demonstrations, definitely anti-Catholic and decidedly anti-religious, then being held—this the message does not state. The message does presume to say, however, that there were local ecclesiastical authorities who considered themselves in a position not to pay any attention to Our prohibition. We do not know of any single local ecclesiastical authority who deserves such an insult and such an offence. We do know, however, and We strongly deplore, the impositions and the threats

and the acts of force used, or permitted to be used, against local ecclesiastical authorities. We know of impious parodies of sacred processions, all of which were permitted to take place to the profound sorrow of the faithful and the great amazement of all citizens who desire peace and order, who were obliged to witness peace and order undefended, and even worse than undefended, by those very persons who have both the solemn duty and vital interest to defend them.

The message calls attention to an argument that has been used many times, in drawing a contrast between the situation in Italy and in other countries where the Church is really persecuted and against which countries there have never been heard words spoken as strong as the words pronounced against Italy, where religion has been restored. We have already said that We conserve, and We shall conserve, a remembrance and an enduring gratitude for what has been done in Italy for the welfare of religion, even if contemporaneously a not less and perhaps greater benefit has accrued therefrom to the party and to the regime. We have stated and We have repeated that it is not necessary (and would indeed oftentimes be decidedly injurious to the ends desired) that everything should be heard and known about that which We and this Holy See, through Our representatives and through Our brothers in the Episcopacy, have to say and have to remonstrate wherever the interests of religion demand it, and in the measure which, in Our judgment, the situation indicates, especially in those places where the Church is really persecuted.

And it was with a grief inexpressible that We saw a real and a true persecution break out in this Our Italy and in this very city of Rome against that which the Church and its head have characterized as most precious and dear to them from the standpoint of liberty and of right, liberty and right that are the heritage of souls and especially of the souls of the young entrusted to the Church in a particular way by the Divine Creator and Redeemer.

As is well known, We have repeatedly and solemnly affirmed and protested that Catholic Action, both from its very nature and essence (the participation and the

collaboration of the laity with the Apostolic Hierarchy) and by Our precise and categorical directions and dispositions, is outside and above every political party. We have also affirmed and protested that We are sure that in Italy Our directions and dispositions have been faithfully obeyed and followed. The message makes the pronouncement that the assertion that Catholic Action did not have a true political character is absolutely false. We wish to call attention to the discourtesy of such a statement; also, because of the motives which the message gives to justify the statement, demonstrate completely the untruth and the lightness of the remark so that We would term it ridiculous if the case were not so sad. For the reason given, that Catholic Action is a political party, is because Catholic Action has banners, badges, identification cards and all the other external forms of a political party, just as if banners, badges and identification cards and other similar external appurtenances were not today the most common thing in every country of the world for the most varied kind of associations and activities which have nothing, and wish to have nothing, in common with politics, such as, for example, sports and professional organizations, civil and military clubs, commercial and industrial groups, school children even organized exclusively in a religious way, as little ones who belong to the Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament. The message itself reveals all the weakness and the futility of this alleged motive, and almost as if hastening to make reparations, it adds three other reasons. The first reason is that the heads of Catholic Action were almost to a man members or heads of the Popular Party, which was one of the strongest opponents of Fascism. This accusation has been launched many times against Catholic Action, but always in a generic manner and without specifying any names. Many times We have asked for precise data and for names, but without result. Only a short time before the police measures taken against Catholic Action, and in evident preparation for them, the hostile press, evidently having access to the police reports, published a series of alleged facts and names: the pretended revelations which are referred to in the beginning of the message and which the *Osserva-*

tore Romano duly denied and corrected, and did not confirm as the message itself asserted it did. It did thereby mystify and deceive the general public.

In regard to Ourselves, Venerable Brethren, in addition to the information which We had already available and from personal investigations had already made, We have considered that it was Our additional duty to secure new information and make new investigations, and behold, Venerable Brethren, the positive results. First of all, We have found out that while the Popular Party was still in existence and before the new party has asserted itself, through directions given in 1919 it was decreed that no one who had occupied a position of responsibility in the Popular Party could contemporaneously be an officer in Catholic Action. We also found out, Venerable Brethren, that the cases of local ex-directors of the Popular Party who subsequently became local directors in the Catholic Action consist of four: we say four, and this small number must be considered in the light of the facts that there are 250 diocesan committees, 4,000 sections of Catholic Action, and more than 5,000 circles of Catholic youths. And We must add that in the four above-cited instances, the individuals concerned have never given any occasion for dispute and some of them are actually sympathizers with and well regarded by the regime and by the party.

And We do not wish to omit mentioning another guarantee that Catholic Action will abstain from politics, a reason which you already well know, Venerable Brethren, Bishops in Italy, and that is that Catholic Action has been, is, and will always be, under the dependence of the Episcopate, under your direction, under you who have always assigned ecclesiastical assistants and have nominated the presidents of the diocesan committees. Whence it is clear that in trusting and recommending to you, Venerable Bishops, these associations which have been assailed, We have not ordered and disposed anything substantially new. When the Popular Party was dissolved and passed out of existence, those who formerly belonged to Catholic Action continued to belong to Catholic Action, and they submitted themselves with perfect discipline to the funda-

mental law of Catholic Action, that is, abstention from every political activity, and so did all those who on that occasion asked to be received as members. And with what justice and charity could these people have been expelled or not admitted to Catholic Action when they possessed the necessary qualifications required by the constitution? The regime and the party which seemed to attribute such a fearful and feared strength to those who belonged to the Popular Party for particular reasons should show themselves grateful to Catholic Action, which removed them precisely from that sphere and required them to make a formal pledge not to carry out any political activities, to limit themselves to religious ones. We cannot—We, Church, religious, faithful Catholics (and not alone We)—We cannot be grateful to one who, after putting out of existence socialism and anti-religious organizations (Our enemies and not alone Ours), has permitted them to be so generally readmitted, as all see and deplore, and has made them even more strong and dangerous inasmuch as they are now hidden and also protected by their new uniform. There has been frequent mention made of infractions of the pledge taken. We have always asked names and concrete facts, always ready to intervene and to take indicated measures. There has never been any reply to Our request.

The message declares that Catholic Action was organized in a political way and that its form of organization had nothing to do with "religious education and propagation of the faith." Leaving aside the unlearned and confused manner in which the purposes of Catholic Action are described, all those who know and live the life of today realize that there is no sort of an initiative or any activity, from the more spiritual and scientific bodies to the more material and mechanical ones, that has not the necessity of organization and of organized action. And the fact that there is an organization does not mean that the end and purpose of the organization is political.

"However," continues the message, "the strongest argument that can be used as justification for the destruction of the Catholic circles of youth is the defense of the state, which is no more than the simple duty of every

government." There is no doubt of the solemnity and the vital importance of such a duty and of such a right, We add, since We hold, and We wish at all costs to practice with all honest and reasonable individuals, that the first right is to do one's own duty.

But all the receivers and readers of the message would have smiled with incredulity or wondered greatly if the message had added what is true, namely that of the Catholic circles of the young which were objects of the measure, 10,000 were—rather, actually are—composed of girls and young women with a total membership of about 500,000. Who can see a serious danger and a real threat against the security of the state in this question? And it must be considered that only 220,000 are inscribed as "effective members." More than 100,000 are little "aspirants;" more than 150,000, still smaller children, are called "benjamins."

There still remain the circles of the Catholic young men, that same Catholic youth which, in the publications of the youth of the party and in the circular letters of the so-called leaders of the party, are represented and held up to ridicule and to scorn (with what sense of pedagogical responsibility, to say only this, anyone may see) as an assembly of "rabbits" and capable only to carry candles and to recite rosaries in sacred processions. And this is perhaps the reason that they have been in these recent days so many times, and with such cowardice, assailed and maltreated even to the shedding of blood, and left undefended by those who could and should protect and defend them, if for no other reason than, being harmless and peaceful, they have been assailed by individuals who frequently bore arms.

If here is the strongest argument for the attempted "destruction" (the word does not leave any doubt about the intentions) of the heroic and noble associations of young men of Catholic Action, you will see, Venerable Brethren, that We could and should congratulate Ourselves on Our position, since the incredible absurdity of this argument is so clearly evident, but evidently We are obliged to repeat that "Iniquity hath lied to itself" (Ps. 26:12), and that the strongest argument for the desired

destruction must be sought in another field: the battle that is now being fought is not political but moral and religious, exquisitely moral and religious.

It is necessary to close one's eyes to this truth in order to find politics where there is nothing but religion and morals, to conclude, as does the message, that an absurd situation had been created by a strong organization at the orders of a "foreign" power, the "Vatican," a thing that no government in this world would have permitted.

There have been sequestered *en masse* the documents of all the seats of Catholic Action, and correspondence that might be suspected to have some relation to the associations affected, and even with those not affected, such as the oratories, continues to be intercepted and sequestered. Tell Us, therefore, tell the country, tell the world—what documents there are and how many of them there are that treat of politics planned and directed by Catholic Action with such peril to the state. We dare to say that none of such will be found, unless they are read and interpreted in accordance with preconceived and unfair ideas, which are contradicted fully by facts and by evidence and by numberless proofs and witnesses.

When, and if there are any genuine documents found, ones that are worthy of consideration, We shall be the first to recognize them and to take them into consideration. But who would wish, for example, to charge a person with political activities and political actions dangerous to the state, for making some complaint or deploring the harsh treatment inflicted so many times and in so many places on the Catholic Action associations, even previous to the time of these latest outbreaks? Instead, there will be found among the sequestered documents proofs and evidences literally numberless of the profound and consistent religious character and of the religious activity of all Catholic Action, and particularly so of the associations of the young and of the university students. It will be sufficient to know and to read, as We Ourselves have done numberless times, the programs, the reports, the proceedings of congresses, of weeks of religious study and of prayer, of spiritual exercises and the frequenting of the Sacraments practiced and promoted, of conferences in

explanation of religion, of studies, of catechetical activities, of cooperation and initiatives of true and pure Christian charity in conferences of St. Vincent de Paul and in many other ways, and in zealous work for missionaries.

And in the presence of such facts and such documentation, therefore, with an eye and a hand on the reality of things, as We have always said, We still say that to accuse the Italian Catholic Action of engaging in politics is a real and true calumny. The facts have demonstrated what was the real target aimed at when Catholic Action was struck, and what was the thing that was being prepared. Only at rare times has it occurred that the fable of the wolf and the lamb has been exemplified so strikingly, and history will not do else but recall this instance.

We, certain to the point of having evidence of restricting ourselves to that which concerns religion, have not been able ever to believe that We could be considered a "foreign power," especially by Catholics and by Italian Catholics. And thanks to this apostolic power which is now entrusted by God to Us, unworthy though We be, thanks to this power, the good Catholics of all the world consider Rome as the second country of each and every one of them. And it is not so long ago that a statesman who will remain certainly among the world's most celebrated, a man neither a Catholic nor a friend of Catholicism, in a crowded political meeting said that he could not consider as a power foreign to Germany that authority which twenty million Germans obeyed.

To say, then, that no government of the world would have permitted the situation created in Italy by the existence of Catholic Action to have continued, it is necessary absolutely to ignore and to forget that in all other states of the world, as far as China, Catholic Action exists and lives and the organizations frequently resemble, even to the smallest details, the Italian Catholic Action, and in some countries the organization is more highly developed than in Italy. In no state of the world has Catholic Action ever been considered as a danger to the state; in no state of the world has Catholic Action been so hatefully treated, so truly persecuted (we do not see what other word conforms to the reality of the truth of the situation)

as in this Our Italy and in this Our Episcopal seat of Rome.

And thus exists this truly absurd situation, not by Us created but against Us. We have assumed a heavy and tedious task. But it has seemed to Us the definite duty of charity and one that is also required by paternal justice, and in this spirit We have fulfilled Our purpose of putting in their true light various facts and truths that some children of Ours had, perhaps not with complete knowledge, distorted and placed in a false light, causing harm to other children of Ours.

THREE

There is one consideration and conclusion. From that which we have been explaining, and still more from the events themselves as they have been evolving, it is clear that these accusations—of political activity by Catholic Action, manifest or disguised hostility of some of its partisans against the regime and the party, as well as its being also the eventual refuge and haven of the refugees who up to the present hostility have been spared through the banner of Catholic Action (See communication from the Directors, June 4, 1931)—it is clear that all these accusations are nothing but a pretext or a cumulation of pretexts.

We dare to say that even Catholic Action itself is only a pretext. That which was desired and that which was attempted was to tear away from the Catholic Action society, and through this process to tear away from the Church, the young, and all the young. So very true is this that, after having talked so much about Catholic Action, aim was taken only at the associations of the young, nor were these attacks limited to associations of the young affiliated with Catholic Action. Then afterward, they were extended and broadened so that the tumultuous measure embraced associations of a simply devotional character and works of pure piety and of a primary catechetical nature, such as sodalities of the Children of Mary and oratories. So great were the exaggerations that on some occasions the grossness of the errors was acknowledged.

This essential point is very largely confirmed from various sources. It is confirmed first of all by many antecedent statements made by personalities more or less responsible, and also by persons representative of the regime and of the party, and which have had their complete commentary and definite confirmation by the latest events.

This confirmation is made all the more explicit and categorical—We were almost about to say solemn and violent—by the one who not only represents all, but who can do all and confirms it in official or quasi-official publications dedicated to the young, in interviews and articles for foreign publication before that in this country, and also, up to this very moment, by messages and communications to representatives of the press.

Another reflection and conclusion immediately and inevitably presents itself. There has been heretofore no attention paid to Our oft-repeated assurances and Our protest. There has been no attention paid to your protests and assurances. Venerable Brethren, about the nature and about the real, true character of Catholic Action and of the sacred and inviolable rights of souls and of the Church that in Catholic Action are represented and personified.

We state, Venerable Brethren, the sacred and inviolable rights of the soul and of the Church, and this is the reflection and conclusion that more than any other concerns Us, as it is, than any other, more grave. Time and time again, as is well known, We have expressed Our thoughts—or, better, the thoughts of the Holy Church—on these important and essential matters, and it is not to you, Venerable Brethren, faithful masters in Israel, that it is necessary to say more. But We must add something for the benefit of those dear people committed to your care and whom as shepherds of souls, you nourish and govern by Divine mandate and who nowadays would almost never be able, save for you, to know the thoughts of the Common Father of their souls. We said sacred and inviolable rights of souls and of the Church because the matter concerns the right of souls to procure for themselves the greatest spiritual good according to the teaching and

under the formation work of the Church, of such a teaching and of such an unique work that it is constituted by Divine mandate in this supernatural order, established in the Blood of God the Redeemer, necessary and obligatory to all in order to participate in the Divine Redemption. It concerns the right of souls so formed to bring the treasures of the Redemption to other souls, thus participating in the activities of the Apostolic Hierarchy.

And in consideration of this double right of souls, We are, as We stated above, happy and proud to wage the good fight for the liberty of consciences, not indeed (as someone, perhaps inadvertently, has quoted Us as saying) for the liberty of conscience which is an equivocal expression too often distorted to mean the absolute independence of conscience, which is absurd in a soul created and redeemed by God.

Besides, there is involved another right of the Church, equally inviolable, to fulfill the imperative Divine commission entrusted to her by her Divine Founder, to bring to souls—to bring to every soul—all the treasures of truth and of good, doctrinal and practical, which He Himself brought to the world. “Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28: 19-20).

And of what great importance are the first years and the age of youth in putting into effect the universal and complete mandate, is demonstrated by the Divine Master Himself, the Creator and the Redeemer of souls, by His example and by these particularly memorable words which are also particularly formidable: “Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of Heaven is for such.” (Matt. 19: 14). Guard and watch over “those little ones that believe in Me (Matt. 18: 6), whose is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19: 14), whose angels in heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 18: 10). Woe to him that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me. (Matt. 18: 6).

And here We find Ourselves in the presence of a contract between authentic affirmations on the one hand and not less authentic facts on the other hand, which reveal,

without the slightest possibility of doubt, the proposal, already in great part actually put into effect, to monopolize completely the young, from the tenderest years up to manhood and womanhood, and all for the exclusive advantage of a party, of a regime based on ideology which clearly resolves itself into a true and real pagan worship of the state, which is no less in contrast with the natural rights of the family than it is in contradiction to the supernatural rights of the Church. To propose and promote such a monopoly, to persecute for this reason Catholic Action, as has been done for some time more or less openly or under cover, to reach this end by striking Catholic Action in the way that has recently occurred, is truly and actually to prevent children from going to Jesus Christ, since it impedes them from going to His Church and even arrives at the point of snatching them with violence from the bosom of both, because where the Church is, there is Jesus Christ.

The Church of Jesus Christ has never contested the rights and the duties of the state concerning the education of its citizens and We Ourselves have recalled and proclaimed them in Our recent Encyclical Letter on the Christian Education of Youth; rights and duties which are unchallengeable as long as they remain within the limits of the state's proper competency, a competency which in its turn is clearly indicated and determined by the missions of the state, missions certainly not only bodily and material, but missions that by the very necessity of their character are contained within the limits of the natural, the earthly and the temporary.

The universal divine mandate with which the Church of Jesus Christ has been by Jesus Christ Himself incommunicably and absolutely commissioned to concern herself with eternity, with heaven and with the supernatural—with that order of things which, on one side, it is of the strictest obligation for every rational creature to consider and to which, on the other side, it is necessary by the very nature of things to subordinate and coordinate the remainder.

The Church of Jesus Christ is certainly acting within the limits of its mandate, not only when it puts into souls the first indispensable beginnings and elements of super-

natural life, but also when it assists and encourages the growth of this supernatural life according to the opportunities and the capacities of persons and in the ways and by the means which, in the Church's judgment, seem suitable also with the purpose of preparing capable and efficient collaborators with the apostolic Hierarchy and clergy. It is Jesus Christ Himself Who made the solemn declaration that He came precisely that souls might have not only some beginning or some element of supernatural life, but that they might have it in greater abundance. "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

It was Jesus Christ Himself who laid the first foundations of Catholic Action. It was Christ Himself Who, choosing and educating the Apostles and Disciples as collaborators in His Divine Apostolate, gave an example which at once was followed by the first holy Apostles, as the Sacred Text itself substantiates.

It is, consequently, an unjustified pretense and, indeed, irreconcilable with the name and the profession of being a Catholic, to come to teach the Church and its Head what is sufficient and what must be sufficient for the education and Christian formation of souls and to enunciate and promote in society, chiefly for the young, the principles of faith and of their full efficiency in life. To the unjustifiable presumption must be added also very clear evidence of the absolute incompetence and complete ignorance of the matters under discussion. Recent events must have opened the eyes of all, since they have demonstrated with evidence that which has come to pass within a few years, not in fact saving, but rather disrupting and destroying the true religious sentiment of Christian and civil education.

You know, Venerable Brethren, Bishops of Italy, from your pastoral experience, that it is a grave and destructive error to believe and to make believe that the work of the Church done by Catholic Action and through Catholic Action is substituted and made superfluous by the religious instruction in the schools and on ecclesiastical assistance of the associations of youth of the party and of the regime. Both are certainly necessary. Without

them the schools and the associations would inevitably and quickly become, by logical and psychological necessity, pagan things. Necessary, therefore, they are, but they are not sufficient. As a matter of fact, with such religious instructions and such ecclesiastical assistance the Church of Jesus Christ can develop only a minimum of her spiritual and supernatural effectiveness and this minimum amid surroundings and in an environment which does not depend on the Church, disturbed and worried by many other scholastic matters and by many other exercises, subject to immediate superiors often little or not at all favorably disposed and occasionally exercising by the example of their lives an influence contrary to their words.

We have said that recent events have proved beyond the shadow of doubt that a few years have been sufficient not to save but to cause to be lost and to be destroyed the true religious sentiment. We do not say alone of Christian, but even of moral and of civil education.

We have seen, in fact, in action a species of religion which rebels against the directions of higher religious authorities, and imposes or encourages the non-observance of these directions—an attitude of religion which is persecution and attempted destruction of that which the supreme head of the religion notably most appreciates and cherishes; a religious sentiment that transcends, and permits others to indulge in insulting words and actions against the person of the Father of all the faithful, even to cry out “Down with the Pope and death to him.” This is real teaching of parricide! It is a semblance of religion which cannot in any way be reconciled with the Catholic doctrine and practice, but is rather something which can be considered contrary to both. The contradiction is most grave in itself and most destructive in its effects when it not only consists of external action perpetrated and carried into effect, but also when there are principles and maxims proclaimed as fundamental and constituting a program.

A conception of the state which makes the young generations belong entirely to it without any exception from the tenderest years up to adult life cannot be recon-

ciled by a Catholic with the Catholic doctrine nor can it be reconciled with the natural right of the family. It is not possible for a Catholic to reconcile with Catholic doctrine the pretense that the Church and the Pope must limit themselves to the external practices of religion, such as Mass and the Sacraments, and then to say that the rest of education belongs to the state.

The erroneous and false doctrines and maxims that We have, up to the present, already pointed out and deplored occurred many times during these last few years, and, as is well known, We have never, with God's help, done any less than Our Apostolic duty in indicating and answering them with the just claims of the genuine Catholic doctrine and with the enunciation of the inviolable rights of the Church of Jesus Christ and of the souls redeemed by His precious blood.

But notwithstanding the judgments and the expectations and the suggestions that have come to us from many sources worthy of the greatest consideration, We have always restrained formal and explicit condemnations, and We have even gone so far as to believe possible and to favor the compatibility of cooperations that to others seemed inadmissible. We have done this because We were thinking and desiring that there would remain always the possibility, or at least doubt, that We had to deal with assertions and exaggerated actions which were sporadic and with elements which were not sufficiently representative, in a word, with assertions and axioms which referred in their censurable parts rather to the persons and to the circumstances than, strictly speaking, to a part of a program. The latest events and the assertions that preceded these events and accompanied them, and the comment made, take away from Us the desired possibility and so we must say that one is not a Catholic except through Baptism and in name, in contrast with the obligations of the name of Catholic and with the Baptismal promises—who adopts and develops a program that makes his doctrines and maxims so opposed to the rights of the Church of Jesus Christ and of souls, one who misunderstands, combats and persecutes Catholic Action

which, as is universally known, the Church and its Head regard as very dear and precious.

You ask Us, Venerable Brethren, in the view of what has taken place, what is to be thought about the formula of an oath which even little boys and girls are obliged to take about executing orders without discussion, from an authority which, as we have seen and experienced, can give orders against all truth and justice and in disregard of the rights of the Church and its souls, which are already by their very nature, sacred and inviolable, and to have them swear to serve with all their strength, even to the shedding of blood, the cause of a revolution that snatches the youth from the Church and from Jesus Christ and which educates its own young forces to hatred, to deeds of violence, and to irreverence, not excluding the person of the Pope himself, as the latest facts have very evidently demonstrated. When you place the question in such terms the answer from the Catholic point of view and also from a human point of view is, inevitably, only one, and We, Venerable Brethren, do not wish to do otherwise than to confirm the answer which you already have given: such an oath as it stands is illicit.

FOUR

And behold Us now in the throes of great anxieties which We know are also yours, Venerable Brethren, especially you who are Bishops in Italy. We are preoccupied, first of all, by the fact that so many of Our children, also young boys and girls, are inscribed and have taken membership with that oath. We deeply pity so many consciences tortured by doubts (torments and doubts of whose existence We have incontrovertible evidence) precisely because of that oath as it was interpreted, especially after the recent occurrences. Realizing the many difficulties of the present times and knowing that membership in the party and the oath are for countless persons a necessary condition for their career, for bread, for life itself, We have sought to find a way which would restore tranquillity to these consciences, reducing to the least possible the external difficulties of the situation, and it seems to Us that such a means for those who have already received

the membership card would be to make for themselves before God, in their own consciences, the reservation such as "Safeguarding the laws of God and of the Church," or "In accordance with the duties of a good Christian," with the firm proposal to declare also externally such a reservation if the need of it might arise.

There, even from whence come these dispositions and these orders We would wish also that Our prayer would arrive, the prayer of a Father that wishes to tranquilize the consciences of so many of his sons in Jesus Christ, and that is that the same reservation be introduced into the form of the oath, unless it might be wished to do something even better, far better, and this is to omit the oath altogether, since it is always an act of religion and certainly has no appropriate place in taking membership in a political party.

We have tried to speak with calm and with serenity, and also with all clarity. However, We cannot be otherwise than concerned that We be well understood, We do not say by you, Venerable Brethren, always and now more than ever so united to Us in thoughts and in sentiments, but by every one.

With everything that We have said up to the present, We have not said that We wished to condemn the party as such. We have intended to point out and to condemn that much in the program and in the action of the party which We have seen and have understood to be contrary to Catholic doctrine and the Catholic practice and therefore irreconcilable with the name and with the profession of Catholics. And in doing this, We have fulfilled a precious duty of Our Episcopal ministry toward Our dear sons who are members of the party, so that they can rest tranquil with the proper consciences of Catholics.

We believe, then, that We have thus at the same time accomplished a good work for the party itself, because what interest and success can the party have in a Catholic country like Italy in maintaining in its program ideas and maxims and practices which cannot be reconciled with a Catholic conscience? The conscience of peoples, as that of individuals, finishes always by returning to

itself and seeking ways that for a longer or shorter period of time they may have lost from view or have abandoned.

And lest it be alleged that Italy is Catholic but anti-clerical, We intend for the sake of caution, to say something in this regard. You, Venerable Brethren, who in the great and small dioceses live in continuous contact with the good population of all the country, you know and you see every day how they, without pretending or without misleading, are completely foreign to any anti-clerical spirit.

It is known by all who are at all familiar with the history of the country that anti-clericalism has had in Italy the importance and the strength which Masonry and Liberalism generated here. In our days, when the unanimous enthusiasm over the Lateran Treaty united and inspired with joy all the country as never before, it would not have been possible for anti-clericalism to reassert itself if it had not been provoked and encouraged on the vigil of the signing of the Treaty. During the latest occurrences, directions and orders have, at will, made it enter into action and made it cease action, as all have been able to see and to verify. And it is beyond any doubt that it would be sufficient and will always be sufficient, to hold it in its proper place, to have a hundredth or a thousandth part of the measures applied which so long have molested Catholic Action and which culminated recently in that proceeding about which now all the world knows.

However, other and very grave worries about the future concern us. It was affirmed, in a meeting which was most official and most solemn—a meeting which was held immediately after these last acts which were for us and for the Catholics of all Italy and of all the world so sad and depressing—it was professed that there was “an unchanged respect toward the Catholic religion, its Supreme Head.” “An unchanged respect”—therefore that same respect without variation which We have already experienced; therefore that respect which had its expression in so many and so vastly extensive, hateful police measures, prepared in deep silence, as a betrayal, and executed with lightning-like suddenness on the very vigil of Our birthday, an occasion of many acts of kindness

and of courtesy toward Us on the part of the Catholic world and also of the non-Catholic world; therefore that same respect that excels in violences and in irreverences permitted to be perpetrated without disturbance.

For what, therefore, can we hope? Or, better, what things must We not expect? There has been someone who has asked if such a strange method of speaking and of writing in such circumstances, in such proximity to such occurrences, was completely free from irony, which would be a really sad irony, which for Our Own part We wish to exclude. In the same context of the communication, and in immediate relation to the "unchanged respect" (therefore, from the same addresses) there is an insinuation about "refuges" and "protections" given to the still remaining opponents of the party, and the directors of the 9,000 groups of Fascists in Italy are ordered to direct their attention to this situation. More than one of you has already experienced giving Us also the sad information about the effect of these remarks and these insinuations and these orders, for there occurred a new outbreak of hateful surveillance, of denunciations, of intimidations.

How, therefore, can We prepare for the future? What can We, and must We, not expect (for We do not fear, since the fear of God expels the fear of man) if, as We have reasons to believe, it is determined not to permit Our Catholic Youth to reunite, even silently, unless the directors are threatened with bitter punishment.

What new thing, therefore, We ask Ourselves, does the future prepare and threaten?

FIVE

It is actually to this extreme of doubts and of provisions to which men have reduced Us, that every worry vanishes, disappears, and Our spirit opens to the most confident and consoling hopes, because the future is in the hands of God and God is with Us, and "If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8: 31).

A sign and a sensible proof of the assistance and of the Divine favor We already see and feel in your helpfulness and cooperation, Venerable Brethren. If We have been

well informed, it has been said recently that now Catholic Action is in the hands of the Bishops and there is nothing more to fear. And up to this point, the statement is good—very good—except for that phrase “nothing more,” as if to say that before there was something to fear, and except also that word “now,” as if before, and from the beginning, Catholic Action was not always essentially diocesan and dependent on the Bishops (as We have above pointed out), and also for this; principally for this, We have always nourished the most certain confidence that Our directions were observed. For this, after the promised unfailing Divine assistance, We remain, and We shall remain, with the most serene confidence, even if tribulation—let us say the exact word, even if persecution—shall continue and intensify.

We know that you are, and you know yourselves that you are, Our Brethren in the Episcopacy and in the Apostolate. We know, and you know, too, Venerable Brethren, that you are the successors of those Apostles that St. Paul called, with words of supreme sublimity, the “Glory of Christ.” (II Cor. 8:23).

You Bishops of Italy know that no mortal man—not even the head of a state or of a government—but the Holy Ghost—has placed you there in places which Peter assigned to you to rule the Church of God. These and so many other holy and sublime things that concern you, Venerable Brethren, are evidently ignored or forgotten by him who thinks of you and calls you, Bishops of Italy, “Officials of the State,” from which the very formula of the oath, which it is necessary for you to make to the sovereign, clearly distinguishes and separates you, for the oath especially states, “as is convenient for a Catholic bishop.”

Great, therefore, and truly a measureless reason for hoping for the best, is the immense chorus of prayers that the Church of Jesus Christ has offered up from all parts of the world to the Divine Founder of the Church and to His Blessed Mother for the Church’s visible head, the successor of Peter, just in the same way as was done twenty centuries ago when persecution assailed Peter himself: the prayers of sacred shepherds of souls and of

peoples, of clergy and of faithful, of members of religious Orders, of adults and of young and of children; prayers in the most exquisite and efficacious forms, of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Eucharistic Communion, of supplications and of acts of adoration and reparation, of spontaneous immolations and of sufferings endured in a Christian manner; prayers of which the echo reached Us during all these days immediately following the sad events and which brought Us great consolation, and never so strong and so consoling as on this sacred and solemn day dedicated to the memory of the Princes of the Apostles and on which day Divine Providence disposed that We were able to finish this Encyclical Letter.

Everything is definitely promised in answer to prayer: if the answer will not be the reestablishment of serene and tranquil relations, it will have its answer at any rate in Christian patience, in holy courage, in the infallible joy of suffering something with Jesus and for Jesus, with the youth and for the youth so dear to Him, until the hour hidden in the mystery of the Divine Heart which will infallibly be the most opportune for the cause of Truth and of Good.

And since from so many prayers We must hope for everything, and since everything is possible to that God Who has promised everything in answer to prayer, We have confident hope that He will illumine minds to Truth and turn wills to Good, so that the Church of God, which wishes nothing from the state that belongs to the competence of the state, will cease to be asked for that which is the Church's competence—the education and the Christian formation of youth—and this not through human favor, but by Divine mandate, and that which therefore she always asks and will always ask with an insistence and an intransigence which cannot cease or waver because it does not come from human desire or design, or from human ideas, changeable in different times and places and circumstances, but from the Divine and inviolable disposition.

And We are inspired also by faith and confidence to believe that good will undoubtedly come from the recognition of such a truth and of such a right.

As the Father of all the redeemed, the Vicar of that Redeemer Who, after having taught and commanded all to love their enemies, died pardoning those who were crucifying Him, is not and never will be the enemy of anyone, so will do the same, all good and true sons, those Catholics who wish to remain worthy of the name of Catholic. But they will not ever be able to agree to adopt or to favor maxims or ways of thinking and acting contrary to the rights of the Church and to the welfare of souls and therefore contrary to the rights of Almighty God. How preferable to this irreducible division of minds and of wills would be the peaceful and tranquil union of thoughts and of feelings that through happy necessity could not help becoming transformed into the fruitful cooperation of all for the true good and for the common good, and that with the sympathetic applause of the Catholics of the world, instead of, as at present, with universal blame and discontent.

We pray the God of all mercies, through the intercession of His Blessed Mother who so recently smiled on us from the splendors of her pluricentenary celebration, and of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, that He make us all see that which is proper to do and give us all the force to put it into effect. May Our Apostolic Blessing, the augury and pledge of Divine blessings, descend upon you, Venerable Brethren, on your clergy, on your people, and remain forever.

Rome, from the Vatican, solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, June 29, 1931.

PIUS XI.