

.. / SAINT MARY

Catholic Church. Pope (1939-1958 : Pius XI)

*Evangelii praecones*

ACA 2653

VII POPES

POPE PIUS XII

Evangelii Praecones  
(On promoting Catholic Missions)





# ***EVANGELII PRAECONES***

**ENCYCLICAL LETTER**

**OF**

**POPE PIUS XII**

**On Promoting Catholic Missions**

**Issued June 2, 1951**



**National Catholic Welfare Conference**

1312 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N. W.

WASHINGTON 5, D. C.

Translation as provided by the Vatican

Press of  
RANDELL INC.  
Washington, D. C.

**Encyclical Letter  
of  
His Holiness Pope Pius XII**

TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHREN, PATRIARCHS,  
PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS AND OTHER  
LOCAL ORDINARIES ENJOYING PEACE AND  
COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE

ON PROMOTING CATHOLIC MISSIONS

VENERABLE BRETHREN  
GREETINGS AND APOSTOLIC BENEDECTION

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Catholic missionaries toiling in a vast field of labor "that the word of the Lord may run its course triumphantly"<sup>1</sup> are in Our thoughts in a special way on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Ecclesiae*<sup>2</sup> of Our Predecessor of immortal memory Pius XI, wherein he laid down wise norms for the greater development of Catholic missions. The consideration of the progress this holy cause has made in the intervening years has brought Us no small consolation. As We remarked in an audience on June 24, 1944, to the directors of the Pontifical Missionary Work: "The Catholic missionary movement both in Christian and pagan lands has gained such force and momentum and is of such proportions as perhaps was never witnessed before in the annals of Catholic missions."<sup>3</sup>

2. In view of the upheavals and dangers of the present time, when not a few peoples are divided by conflicting interests, We consider it very opportune on the present occasion to reiterate Our approval of this work. For missionaries preach to all men the practice of natural and Christian vir-

<sup>1</sup> *II Thess.*, III, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1926, p. 65 sq.

<sup>3</sup> *A.A.S.*, 1944, p. 209.

tues and that brotherly and common fellowship which transcends racial conflicts and national frontiers.

### **Manifest Universal Christian Charity**

3. On that occasion when We addressed the directors of the above mentioned Work, We made the following observations among others: “. . . It is in keeping with your apostolate not to be hampered by any national frontiers; for your work which unites you in fraternal cooperation, clearly manifests to all that note of the Catholic Church which rejects discord, flees division, and abhors all disputes which agitate nations and sometimes bring them to utter ruin. We refer to that Christian faith and universal Christian charity which transcend all opposing camps and national boundaries and reach out to the ends of the earth. They are the motives that spur each one of you on to reach your goal, which is the establishment of the Kingdom of God throughout the whole world.”<sup>4</sup>

4. We gladly avail Ourselves of this 25th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* to express Our appreciation of the work which has been accomplished and the great consolation it has given Us, and further to exhort all to go forward with still greater zeal: all Our venerable brethren in the Episcopacy, We mean, all missionaries, priests and individual faithful, both in missionary lands and throughout the whole world, who by their prayers, by training and helping future missionaries, or by obtaining material aid promote this most important work.

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### **I. GREAT PROGRESS OF THE MISSIONS**

5. We should like first of all to touch here briefly on the progress that has happily been made. In 1926 the number of Catholic missions amounted to 400, but today it is almost 600. At that date the number of Catholics in the missions did not exceed 15,000,000 while today it is almost 20,800,000. At that time the number of native and foreign priests in the missions was about 14,800; today their number is more than 26,800. Then all Bishops in the missions were for-

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<sup>4</sup> A.A.S., 1944, p. 207.

eigners; during the past 25 years 88 missions have been entrusted to native clergy; moreover with the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and the appointment of native Bishops in quite a few places, it has become more apparent that the religion of Jesus Christ is really Catholic and that no part of the world is excluded from it.

### **Increases in Numerous Countries**

6. For instance in Pakistan and in some parts of Africa the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy has been juridically established; three very important Plenary Councils have been held, the first in 1934 in Indochina, the second in 1937 in Australia and the third last year in India. Minor seminaries have been greatly increased and strengthened. The number of those studying in major seminaries, which 25 years ago was only 1,770 is now 4,300; moreover, many regional seminaries have been built. Attached to the College of Propaganda Fide in Rome a Missionary Institute has been inaugurated; while in Rome and elsewhere not a few university faculties and chairs of missiology have been founded. Likewise in this beloved city the College of St. Peter has been equipped to give a more thorough and better adapted theological, moral and apostolic training to native priests. Moreover, two universities have been founded; high schools which formerly numbered 1,600, today number more than 5,000; the number of elementary and primary schools has been almost doubled; the same can be said for dispensaries and hospitals where every kind of sick and infirm, including lepers, are cared for. In addition there have been the following developments: "The Missionary Union of the Clergy" during this period has increased greatly; "Fides" news service has been established; almost everywhere missionary periodicals are growing in number and enjoy a wide circulation; many missionary congresses have been held, among which that held in Rome during the Holy Year deserves special mention, giving as it did a clear picture of the nature and extent of the missionary work being done; a short time ago a Eucharistic Congress was held at Wumasi in the Gold Coast of Africa which was remarkable alike for the number and piety of its participants; and lastly a special day in the year has been appointed by Us to help with prayer and alms the Pontifical Work of the

Holy Childhood.<sup>5</sup> All these developments make it obvious that the work of the apostolate has adapted itself to the changing conditions and growing needs of our times by employing new and more modern methods.

### **New Apostolic Delegations Fruitful**

7. Nor must We omit to mention that during this period there were duly established in different regions five Apostolic Delegations, which are under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide; moreover Apostolic Nuncios or Internuncios have been appointed to a number of missionary territories. In this connection it may be asserted that the presence and activity of these prelates have borne abundant fruit. It is their special merit that greater coordination and collaboration have been realized among missionaries who are working toward a common end. Our Legates likewise have contributed considerably to this result. They often visit each district and also from time to time take part in Our name in meetings of the Hierarchy during which the experiments which have been prudently tried out by different local Ordinaries are pooled to the common advantage, and by common agreement easier and more efficient methods of apostolate have been adopted. Besides, this fraternal coordination of the activities of the faith has also been conducive to a better appreciation of the Catholic religion on the part of public authorities, even when they are non-Catholic.

### **Faith Shared a Mutual Encouragement**

8. What We have briefly written here about the progress of the missions during the past 25 years, and what We had the pleasure of witnessing during the Holy Year, when considerable numbers from distant missionary countries flocked to Rome to obtain grace and to receive Our blessing—all this, We say, strongly urges Us to repeat the burning desire expressed by the Apostle of the Gentiles when writing to the Romans: “. . . that I may have some spiritual gift to share with you so as to strengthen your resolve; or rather, so that the faith we find in each other, you and I, may be an encouragement to you and to me as well.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Epist. *Praeses Consilii*, A.A.S., 1951, pp. 88-89.

<sup>6</sup> *Rom.*, I, 11-12.



9. It seems to Us that the Divine Master Himself is repeating to everyone those words of consolation and exhortation: "Lift up your eyes and see the countries; for they are white already to harvest."<sup>7</sup> But since the number of missionaries is inadequate for present needs, the following words are in a way the counterpart of that invitation: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest."<sup>8</sup>

### **Increasing Vocations a Great Consolation**

10. It is a great consolation to Us to know that the number of missionary vocations is happily on the increase at the present time and promises well for the Church; still very much remains to be done; there is still much need of prayer. When We consider the countless peoples who are to be called to the one fold and to the one haven of salvation by the preaching of these missionaries, We address to the heavenly Prince of Pastors the words of Ecclesiasticus: "For as thou hast been sanctified in us in their sight, so thou shalt be magnified among them in our presence, that they may know thee, as we also have known thee, that there is no God beside thee, O Lord."<sup>9</sup>

### **Blood of Martyrs Part of the Cost**

11. Now this salutary progress of the work of the missions has cost not only the ceaseless and great labors of those who sowed the seed of the Gospel, but also much blood of Martyrs. During the course of the centuries there have not been lacking in some countries most violent persecutions of the nascent Church; and in our own time there are countries in the Far East which are being purpled with martyrs' blood in the same cause. We have learned that many of the faithful and also nuns, missionaries, native priests and even Bishops have been driven from their homes, despoiled of their possessions and languish in want as exiles or have been arrested, thrown into prison or into concentration camps, or sometimes cruelly done to death, because they were devoutly attached to their faith.

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<sup>7</sup> John, IV, 35.

<sup>8</sup> Matth. IX, 37-38.

<sup>9</sup> *Eccclus.*, XXXVI, 4-5.

## **“If They Have Persecuted Me . . .”**

12. Our heart is overwhelmed with grief when We think of the hardships, suffering and death of these our beloved children. Not only do We love them with a fatherly love, but We reverence them with a fatherly veneration, since We are fully aware that their high sense of duty is sometimes crowned with martyrdom. Jesus Christ, the first martyr, said: “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”<sup>10</sup> “In the world you will have distress. But have confidence. I have overcome the world.”<sup>11</sup> “Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”<sup>12</sup>

13. Missionaries in foreign lands who die in the fulfilment of their sacred duty are seeds destined, when God so wills, to bear abundant fruit. Wherefore the Apostle Paul asserted: “We glory in tribulations.”<sup>13</sup> St. Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr, consoled and animated the Christians of his day with these words: “The Lord has willed that we should even rejoice over persecutions because, when persecutions occur, then the faith is crowned, God’s soldiers are put to the test, and heaven is opened to martyrs. We have not enlisted in an army merely to think of peace and to decline battle, seeing that the Lord, the master of humility, tolerance and suffering, has taken the first place in the conflict, that He might first do what He taught us to do and that He might Himself first endure for us what He exhorts us to endure.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Missionaries Compared to Early Christians**

14. The missionaries who toil in distant lands are championing a cause not unlike that of the early Church. For those who along with the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, brought the Gospel to the citadel of the Roman Empire found themselves in a rather similar situation in Rome. If one remembers that the infant Church at that time was devoid of all natural means and was exposed to hardships, trials and persecutions, he must be deeply struck with

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<sup>10</sup> John, XV, 20.

<sup>11</sup> John, XVI, 33.

<sup>12</sup> John, XII, 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> *Rom.*, V, 3.

<sup>14</sup> S. Cyprian *Epist.* LVI; ML, IV, 351A.

admiration at the sight of a handful of unarmed Christians overthrowing what was perhaps the greatest power that ever existed. What happened then, will undoubtedly often happen again. Just as the youth David, who put his trust more in God's help than in his own sling, laid low the armor-clad giant Goliath, so the Divine society, which Christ founded, can never be overcome by an earthly power, but is destined to come forth the serene conqueror of all persecutions. Though We know well that this is due to the indefectible Divine promises, still We cannot but express Our gratitude to all those who have borne witness to their unshaken and invincible faith in Jesus Christ and in His Church, the pillar and ground of truth,<sup>15</sup> exhorting them at the same time to continue in their constancy.

15. News very frequently reaches Us of their invincible and virile faith, which fills Our heart with great consolation. Though some have tried to separate the children of the Catholic Church from Rome and from this Apostolic See, as though patriotism and loyalty so required, yet Catholics have been and are able to make the fully justified rejoinder that, while they are second to none in the matter of patriotism, they genuinely desire to enjoy a rightful liberty.

### **1,000,000,000 Brethren "in Darkness and Shadow"**

16. Now what We have touched upon above, must be particularly borne in mind, namely, that what still remains to be accomplished in this field calls for an enormous effort and innumerable laborers. Let us remember that our brethren "who sat in darkness and shadow"<sup>16</sup> form an immense multitude that can be reckoned at about 1,000,000,000. Hence it appears that the ineffable sigh of the most loving Heart of Christ is echoing still: "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring. And they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."<sup>17</sup>

### **Dangers of Atheistic Materialism**

17. There are some shepherds, as you know, Venerable Brethren, who strive to lead away the sheep from this one

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *I Tim.*, III, 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ps.*, CVI, 10.

<sup>17</sup> *John*, X, 16.

fold and haven of salvation; you likewise know that this danger is daily growing greater. When We consider before God the immense number of men without the truth of the Gospel, and duly reckon the grave danger that faces many from the prevalence of atheistic materialism or from a certain so-called Christian creed which is infected by the tenets and errors of communism, We feel the deepest concern and solicitude that nothing be left undone to promote the work of the apostolate throughout the world. We make Our own the exhortation of the Prophet saying: "Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet."<sup>18</sup>

### **Special Prayer for Latin American Missionaries**

18. We pray God especially for those missionaries who labor in the interior of Latin America, since We are aware of the dangerous pitfalls to which they are exposed from the open and covert attacks of heretical teaching.

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## **II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND NORMS**

19. With a view to promoting still more effectively the work of evangelization by our missionaries and to prevent one drop of their sweat and blood from being shed in vain, We should like here to explain briefly the principles and norms that must guide the zeal and activity of Catholic missionaries.

### **Very Great and Sublime Vocation**

20. First of all it is to be observed that the person who has been called by God to evangelize distant non-Christian lands, has received a very great and sublime vocation. He consecrates his life to God in order to spread His Kingdom to the farthest ends of the earth. He does not seek what is his, but what is Christ's.<sup>19</sup> He can apply to himself in a special way those beautiful sayings of St. Paul: "For Christ . . . we are ambassadors."<sup>20</sup> "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh."<sup>21</sup> "To the weak I

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<sup>18</sup> Is., LVIII, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Phil.*, II, 21.

<sup>20</sup> *II Cor.*, V, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *II Cor.*, X, 3.

became weak that I might gain the weak.”<sup>22</sup> He must, therefore, consider the country he is going to evangelize as a second fatherland and love it with due charity. Furthermore let him not seek any earthly advantage for his own country or religious Institute, but rather what may help towards the salvation of souls. Certainly he should dearly love his fatherland and his Order, but the Church should be loved with a still more ardent devotion. And let him remember that nothing will be to the advantage of his own Order that is detrimental to the good of the Church.

### **Broad Education Necessary**

21. Moreover it is necessary that those who are called to this kind of apostolate should not only get the spiritual and intellectual training that befits ecclesiastical students, before going out on the mission field, but should learn in addition those subjects which will be most useful to them when they come to preach the Gospel in foreign lands. Hence they should be given a sound knowledge of languages, especially of those which they will require at some future date. Besides, they should be sufficiently instructed in the sciences of medicine, agriculture, ethnography, history, geography, etc.

### **Goal: To Establish the Church**

22. The object of missionary activity, as all know, is to bring the light of the Gospel to new races and to form new Christians. However, the ultimate goal of missionary endeavor, which should never be lost sight of, is to establish the Church on sound foundations among non-Christian peoples, and place it under its own native Hierarchy.

### **To Bring the Light of Faith**

23. In a letter which We wrote on August 9 last year to Our beloved son Peter Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, Prefect of the S. Congregation of Propaganda Fide, We mentioned the following points among others: “The Church’s aim is not the domination of peoples or the gaining of temporal dominions; she is eager only to bring the supernatural light of faith to all peoples, and to promote the interests of civilization and culture, and fraternal concord among nations.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *I Cor.*, IX, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Epist. *perlibenti equidem*; A.A.S., 1950, p. 727.

## Until the Last Man Is Reached

24. In the Apostolic Letter *Maximum illud*<sup>24</sup> of Our Predecessor of immortal memory, Benedict XV, given in the year 1919, and in the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Ecclesiae*,<sup>25</sup> of Our immediate Predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, it was laid down that the missions should have as the final goal of their activities the establishment of the Church in new territories. And We Ourselves when, as We have said, received in audience the directors of mission activities in 1944, made the following statement: "The magnanimous and noble purpose which missionaries have is the propagation of the faith in new lands in such a way that the Church may ever become more firmly established in them and as soon as possible reach such a stage of development that it can continue to exist and flourish without the aid of missionary organizations. These missionary organizations do not serve their own ends, but it is their task to use every endeavor to realize the lofty purpose We have already mentioned. When that has been attained, then let them be happy to turn to other fields."<sup>26</sup> "Wherefore let the missionary take up no permanent abode in those places where the work of the apostolate has reached full development, since it is up to him to evangelize and sanctify the whole world. The missionary's appointed task is to promote ever more rapidly in district after district till the last man in the most remote corner of the earth has been reached, the Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer Who rose triumphant from the dead and to Whom is given all power in heaven and on earth."<sup>27 28</sup>

## To Train a Native Clergy

25. It is clear, however, that the Church cannot be properly and duly established in new territories, unless all is there organized as time and circumstances require and especially unless a native clergy equal to the need has been properly educated and trained. In this connection We should like to borrow the grave and wise directives of the Encyclical Let-

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<sup>24</sup> A.A.S., 1919, p. 440 sq.

<sup>25</sup> A.A.S., 1926, p. 65 sq.

<sup>26</sup> A.A.S., 1944, p. 210.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Matth., XXVIII, 18.

<sup>28</sup> A.A.S., 1944, p. 208.

ter *Rerum Ecclesiae*: “. . . While each of you should try to have as large a number of native students as possible, you must further make it your aim to fashion and develop in them sacerdotal sanctity and such an apostolic spirit and zeal for the salvation of their own people that they will be ready to lay down their lives for their fellow-tribesmen and fellow-countrymen.”<sup>29</sup>

### Foreign Missionaries May Be Forced to Leave

26. “Suppose owing to war or political upheavals there is a change of government in some missionary territory, and the request is made or a law is passed that the foreign missionaries of a certain country must leave: suppose again a more unlikely case, that the native population raised to a higher degree of culture and political development, in order to gain its freedom, wants to drive out of their territory all governors, armed forces and missionaries belonging to the occupying foreign power and that it cannot do so otherwise than by force. What then, We ask, would be the disaster that would threaten the Church throughout all that territory, unless full provision has been made for the needs of the Christian populace by a network of native priests throughout the whole country?”<sup>30</sup>

### Korea and China

27. We are profoundly grieved as We behold these conditions which Our immediate Predecessor described with almost prophetic vision verified in many parts of the Far East. There what were most flourishing missions ripe for the harvest,<sup>31</sup> are now, alas, reduced to the direst straits. Would that it were permitted Us to hope that the peoples of Korea and China, who are naturally cultured and honorable and have been renowned from early times for their high standard of civilization, may as soon as possible be freed not only from turbulent factions and wars, but from the inimical doctrine which seeks only the things of earth and scorns the things of heaven; and, moreover that they may appraise rightly the Christian charity and virtue of foreign mission-

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<sup>29</sup> A.A.S., 1926, p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 75.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. John, IV, 35.

aries and native priests who strive only to promote the genuine good of the people by their labors and, if necessary, by the sacrifice of their lives.

### **Heartfelt Thanks for Native Priests and Bishops**

28. We return heartfelt thanks to God that in both countries a numerous clergy chosen from among the people has grown up as the future hope of the Church, and that not a few dioceses have been entrusted to the care of native Bishops. That this stage of development should have been reached redounds to the credit of the foreign missionaries.

### **Foreign Missionaries to Remain as Auxiliaries**

29. In this respect We think fit to point out something which should be carefully borne in mind when mission territory that has been under the care of foreign missionaries is intrusted to a native Bishop and clergy. It is not necessary that the religious institute whose members tilled the mission field with their sweat, should leave it altogether when by decree of the S. Congregation of Propaganda Fide the vineyard, which was cultivated by them and is now flourishing, is handed over to other husbandmen. It will be advantageous and becoming that such a religious institute remain on to cooperate with the newly appointed native Bishop. As in the rest of the Catholic dioceses of the world Religious usually assist the local Ordinary, so in mission countries let them not cease, though foreigners, to labor for the Church in an auxiliary capacity. Thus what the Divine Master proclaimed at the well of Sichar will be happily fulfilled: "And he that reapeth, receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."<sup>32</sup>

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## **III. COOPERATION OF THE LAITY**

30. We desire to address and exhort in this Encyclical Letter not only missionary priests but also those laymen who "with a great heart and a willing mind"<sup>33</sup> collaborate with the missionaries in the ranks of Catholic Action.

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<sup>32</sup> John, IV, 36.

<sup>33</sup> *II Mach.*, I, 3.



31. It can certainly be claimed that the lay cooperation which we today call Catholic Action, has existed since the foundation of the Church. Indeed the Apostles and other preachers of the Gospel received no little help from it and the Christian religion thereby made great advances. In this respect Apollo, Lidia, Aquila, Priscilla and Philemon are mentioned by the Apostle of the Gentiles. We have also these words of his to the Philippians: "Yes, and I ask thee, who sharest the yoke so loyally, to take part with them; they have worked for the Gospel at my side, as much as Clement and those other fellow-laborers of mine, whose names are recorded in the book of life."<sup>34</sup>

32. Likewise all know that the Gospel followed the great Roman roads and was spread not only by Bishops and priests but also by public officials, soldiers and private citizens. Thousands of Christian neophytes, whose names are today unknown, were fired with zeal to promote the new religion they had embraced and endeavored to prepare the way for the coming of the Gospel. That explains why after about 100 years Christianity had penetrated into all the chief cities of the Roman Empire.

### **Advance Guard of Catholic Action**

33. St. Justinus, Minucius Felix, Aristides, the consul Acilius Glaber, the patrician Flavius Clemens, St. Tarcicius and countless holy martyrs of both sexes, who strengthened and enriched the growth of the Church by their labors and the shedding of their blood, can in a certain sense be called the advance guard and forerunners of Catholic Action. Here we wish to cite the striking observation of the author of the letter to Diognetus,<sup>35</sup> which even today has a message for us: "Christians dwell in their native countries as though aliens; . . . every foreign land is their home and the land of their birth is foreign soil."

34. During the barbarian invasions of the Middle Ages, we see men and women of royal rank and even workmen and valiant Christian women of the common people using every endeavor to convert their fellow citizens to the religion of Jesus Christ and to fashion their morals according to its

<sup>34</sup> *Phil.*, IV, 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Epist. ad Diognetum*, V, 5; ed. Funk, I, 399.

pattern, so as to safeguard both religion and the state from approaching danger. Tradition tells us that when our immortal Predecessor, Leo the Great, courageously opposed Attila, when he invaded Italy, two Roman consuls stood by his side. When formidable hordes of Huns were besieging Paris, the holy virgin Genevieve, who was given to a life of continuous prayer and austere penance, cared for the souls and bodies of her fellow citizens with wondrous charity. Theodolinda, Queen of the Lombards, zealously summoned her people to embrace the Christian religion. King Recaredus of Spain endeavored to rescue his people from the Arian heresy and to lead them back to the true Faith. In France, there were not only Bishops, such as Remigius of Rheims, Caesarius of Arles, Gregory of Tours, Eligius of Noyon and many others, who were eminent for virtue and apostolic zeal, but queens also can be found during that period who taught the truths of Christianity to the untutored masses and who gave food and shelter and renewed strength to the sick, the hungry and the victims of every human misfortune. For example, Clotilda so influenced Clovis in favor of the Catholic religion that she had the great joy of bringing him into the true Church. Radegunda and Bathilda cared for the sick with supreme charity and even restored lepers to health. In England, Queen Bertha welcomed St. Augustine when he came to evangelize that nation and earnestly exhorted her husband Ethelbert to accept the teachings of the Gospel. No sooner had the Anglo-Saxons, of both high and low degree, men and women, young and old, embraced the Christian faith, than they were led as though by Divine inspiration to unite themselves to this Apostolic See by the closest bonds of piety, fidelity and devotion.

### **Early Lay Action in Germany**

35. In Germany, we witness the admirable spectacle of St. Boniface and his companions traversing those regions on their apostolic journeys and making them fruitful by their generous labors. The sons and daughters of that valiant and noble land felt inspired to offer their efficient collaboration to monks, priests and Bishops in order that the light of the Gospel might be daily more widely diffused throughout those vast regions and that Christian doctrine and Christian

virtue might ever make greater advances and reap a rich harvest of souls.

36. Thus in every age, thanks to the tireless labors of the clergy and also to the cooperation of the laity, the Catholic Church has not only advanced its spiritual kingdom, but has also led nations to increased social prosperity. Everybody knows the social reforms of St. Elizabeth in Hungary, of St. Ferdinand in Castile and of St. Louis IX in France. By their holy lives and zealous labors they brought about salutary improvement in the different classes of society by instituting reforms, by spreading the true Faith everywhere, by valiantly defending the Church and above all by their personal example. Nor are We unaware of the excellent merits of the guilds during the Middle Ages. In these guilds artisans and skilled workers of both sexes were enrolled, who, notwithstanding the fact that they lived in the world, kept their eyes fixed upon the sublime ideal of evangelical perfection. Not only did they eagerly pursue this ideal, but together with the clergy they exerted every effort to bring all others to do the same.

### **Imperative that Laity Cooperate**

37. The same conditions which prevailed in the early days of the Church are still to be found in many areas which have been evangelized by missionaries; or at least their peoples suffer disadvantages which had to be left to a future generation to face and remedy. For that reason it is imperative that the laity should in great numbers enter the serried ranks of Catholic Action, and thus cooperate generously, earnestly and diligently with the Hierarchy in promoting the apostolate. The work of catechists is assuredly necessary and we wish to give them due praise; yet no less necessary is the industry and skill of those who out of pure charity are ready to help gratuitously the ministers of God in the performance of their duties.

### **Auxiliary Organizations of Laity**

38. We therefore desire that there be everywhere erected, as far as is possible, associations of Catholic men and women, and also of students, of workers, of artists, of athletes, and other clubs and sodalities, which can be considered the aux-

iliaries of the missionaries. In the erection and constitution of these organizations, let character, virtue and zeal be preferred to numbers.

39. It is to be borne in mind that nothing is more efficacious in winning for missionaries the confidence of fathers and mothers than devoted care bestowed upon their children. If the minds of the young are moulded to Christian truth and their characters fashioned according to Christian virtue, they will enrich and bring distinction to not only their families but also their communities. It not rarely happens that if the life of a Christian community be in any way remiss or lax, they succeed in restoring it to its pristine vigor.

### **Action as Citizens and Catholics**

40. Although it is clear that Catholic Action should exercise its influence primarily in promoting the works of the apostolate, its members are not prevented from joining other organizations whose purpose is to reform social and political life according to the principles and teaching of the Gospel; in fact, their participation not only as citizens, but as Catholics also, is a right which they possess and a duty to which they are bound.

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## **IV. TEACHING, PUBLISHING AND MEDICAL ACTIVITIES**

41. Since young men, and those especially who have had the advantage of a classical and liberal education, will direct the course of the future, no one can be blind to the supreme importance of devoting the best of care to elementary schools, high schools and colleges. Therefore, with paternal solicitude We exhort superiors of missions to spare neither labor nor expense in proportion to their means in vigorously promoting this phase of missionary activity.

### **Utility of Schools**

42. The utility of schools for the young lies especially in this that they establish advantageous relationships between the missionaries and pagans of every class, and above all, they more easily influence the docile minds of the young to understand, appreciate and embrace Catholic doctrine. As

we all know, the educated youth of today will form the governments of tomorrow and the masses will follow their leadership and guidance. The Apostle of the Gentiles propounded the sublime wisdom of the Gospel before a learned audience when in the Areopagus of Athens he proclaimed the unknown God. Even though this method does not make many converts outright to the teaching of our Divine Redeemer, still there will be many who, as they contemplate the supernatural beauty of this religion and the charity of its disciples, will feel its benign influence.

43. Schools and colleges are moreover especially helpful in refuting the errors which now especially are daily infecting more and more non-Catholic and communist activities and which are being openly and covertly instilled into the minds especially of youth.

### **Distribution of Publications Commended**

44. An equally useful service is the dissemination of timely publications. It is scarcely necessary for Us to dwell at length on this point, for everyone knows how effectively newspapers, magazines and reviews can be employed either to present truth and virtue in their proper light and inculcate them deeply upon men, or to expose fallacies masquerading under the guise of truth, or to refute certain false opinions which are hostile to religion, or which do great spiritual harm by distorted presentation of vexed social questions. Hence We warmly commend those Bishops who interest themselves in the widest possible distribution of printed works of this sort which have been carefully edited. Though much has already been done in this regard, much remains to be done.

### **Tribute to Work for the Sick**

45. We also wish at this point to pay the highest tribute of praise to the care taken of the sick, the infirm and afflicted of every kind; We mean hospitals, leprosaria, dispensaries and homes for the aged and for maternity cases, and orphanages. These are to Our eyes the fairest flowers of missionary endeavor; they give us as it were a vision of the Divine Redeemer Himself, who "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Act.*, X, 38.

46. Such outstanding works of charity are undoubtedly of the highest efficacy in preparing the souls of non-Christians and in drawing them to the Faith and to the practice of Christianity; besides, Our Lord said to His Apostles: "Into what city soever you enter, and they receive you, . . . heal the sick that are therein, and say to them: the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."<sup>37</sup>

### Professional Training Required

47. However, the Brothers and nuns who feel that they are called to undertake such work must, before leaving their own country, acquire the professional training and knowledge which are today required in these matters. We know that there are nuns with full professional qualifications who have earned well merited recognition by the special study of loathsome diseases, such as leprosy, and by discovering remedies for them. These and all other missionaries who are giving their service so generously in leper hospitals, have Our paternal blessing, and their exalted charity compels Our admiration and praise.

48. With regard to medicine and surgery, however, it will certainly be advisable to enlist the services also of laymen, provided not only that they have taken the necessary degrees for this work, and are willing to leave their homeland in order to help the missionaries, but also that in the matter of faith and morals they leave nothing to be desired.

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## V. SOCIAL REFORMS DEMANDED

49. Passing now to another aspect of the subject which is of no less importance, We wish to speak of social reforms demanded by justice and charity. Whilst the propaganda of Communism, today so widespread, is readily deceiving the minds of the simple and untutored, We seem to hear an echo of those words of the Divine Saviour: "I have compassion on the multitude."<sup>38</sup> It is imperative to put into practice with zeal and diligence the right principles taught by the Church in this matter. It is imperative to keep all nations free from those pernicious errors, or, in case they

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<sup>37</sup> Luke, X, 8-9.

<sup>38</sup> Mark, VIII, 2.

are already tainted with them, to set them free from these inimical doctrines which represent the enjoyment of this world as the unique goal to be attained by men in this mortal life. At the same time, by subjecting everything to state ownership and control, they reduce the dignity of the human person almost to zero. It is imperative to proclaim in private and in public that we are all exiles making our way to our immortal home; and are destined to eternal happiness, to which truth and virtue must lead us. Christ is the only real defender of human justice, the only true consoler of the human misery that in this life is unavoidable. He alone points out to us that haven of peace, justice, and everlasting happiness which all of us, redeemed by His blood, are to gain after our earthly pilgrimage is finished.

50. However, it is the duty of all, as far as possible, to mitigate the distress, sweeten the sorrow and relieve the anguish of their brethren during this life.

### **Not only Charity but Justice**

51. Charity indeed can remedy to a certain extent many unjust social conditions. But that is not enough. For in the first place there must be justice which should prevail and be put into practice.

### **The Right to Goods of the Earth**

52. Apropos of this, We might cite Our words to the College of Cardinals and the Bishops at Christmastime, 1942: "The Church has condemned the various forms of Marxist Socialism; and she condemns them again today, because it is her permanent right and duty to safeguard men from fallacious arguments and subversive influence that jeopardize their eternal salvation. But the Church cannot ignore or overlook the fact that the worker, in his efforts to better his lot, is opposed by a machinery which is not only not in accordance with nature, but is at variance with God's plan and with the purpose He had in creating the goods of the earth. In spite of the fact that the ways they followed are false and to be condemned, what Christian, and especially what priest, could remain deaf to the heartfelt cries that call for justice and a spirit of brotherly collaboration in a world made by a just God? Such silence would be culpable and

unjustifiable before God, and contrary to the inspired teaching of the Apostle, who, while he inculcates the need of resolution in the fight against error, also knows that we must be full of sympathy for those who err, and give due consideration to their arguments, encourage and help them. . . . The dignity of the human person then, speaking generally, requires as a natural foundation of life the right to the use of the goods of the earth. To this right corresponds the fundamental obligation to grant private ownership of property, if possible, to all. Positive legislation, regulating private ownership may change and more or less restrict its use. But if legislation is to play its part in the pacification of the community, it must see to it that the worker, who is or will be the father of a family, is not condemned to an economic dependence and servitude which is irreconcilable with his rights as a person.

53. "Whether this servitude arises from the exploitation of private capital or from state absolutism, the result is the same. Indeed, under the pressure of a State which dominates all and controls the whole field of public and private life, even going into the realm of personal opinions, projects and beliefs, the loss of liberty is so great that still more serious consequences can follow, as experience proves."<sup>39</sup>

### **Missionaries Should Promote Social Apostolate**

54. To you, Venerable Brethren, who labor so well in the Catholic Mission fields, is given the task of carefully putting these ideals and aims into practice. Ever keeping in mind special circumstances and varying conditions of time and place, take counsel together in your Bishops' meetings, in your synods and other gatherings, and strive by all possible means to establish those social welfare associations, organizations and societies which the present time and the modern mind seem to demand. Your pastoral office certainly requires this, lest the flock entrusted to you be led astray from the right path by passion and by new errors disguised as truth and justice. In this task let the missionaries who are your able cooperators, distinguish themselves in promoting this apostolate. Thus they can be sure that it will not be said to them: "The children of this world are wiser . . .

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<sup>39</sup> A.A.S., 1943, pp. 16-17.



than the children of light.”<sup>40</sup> It will moreover prove helpful if they, whenever possible, gather round themselves qualified Catholic laymen of outstanding character and practical ability, who can take up and advance these works.

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## VI. MORE HELP NEEDED IN SOME TERRITORIES

### No Private Titles in Perpetuity

55. In former times the vast missionary field was not limited within the set confines of various ecclesiastical territories, nor was it entrusted to different religious institutes to be worked along with a growing native clergy. This, as all know, generally obtains today. It even sometimes happens that some mission territories are entrusted to the members of a particular province of a religious institute. We see the utility of this, of course, since by this method the organization of Catholic missions is conveniently facilitated. This arrangement, however, may give rise to serious inconveniences, which must be remedied as far as possible. Our predecessors have touched this point in the Letters,<sup>41</sup> which We have already referred to. In this matter they have laid down wise norms. We repeat them here and ratify them, paternally exhorting you “to accept and comply with them religiously in keeping with your well known zeal for religion and the salvation of souls. In those territories which the Apostolic See has entrusted to your zeal to be won to Christ our Lord, it sometimes happens, since they are often very extensive, that the number of missionaries each of you has from his own religious institute is far less than what is needed. In similar circumstances, even in fully established dioceses, additional priests, Brothers, and Sisters from different religious families come in and help the Bishop. So, too, in the missions, do not hesitate to summon to your aid as your co-workers missionaries who are not of your own religious family, whether they be priests or belong to lay institutes. They can be called in to help in spreading the Faith, to educate the native youth, and to engage in other missionary activities. Let religious orders and congregations take legitimate pride in the foreign missions entrusted

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<sup>40</sup> Luke, XVI, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. A.A.S., 1919, p. 444; and A.A.S., 1926, pp. 81-82.

to them, as well as in the harvest of souls so far won for Christ's Kingdom. But let them remember that they have not received their portion of the Lord's vineyard by a kind of private title in perpetuity. Rather they hold it at the will of the Holy See, whose right and responsibility it is to see that it is fully developed. The Roman Pontiff does not fulfill his apostolic duty merely by portioning out larger or smaller mission territories among different religious institutes. What is more important, he must make it his continual and anxious care that these institutes send into the territories entrusted to them missionaries sufficient in numbers and especially in apostolic quality to preach the Gospel successfully throughout the whole territory."<sup>42</sup>

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## VII. PRESERVE THE GOOD IN NATIVE CULTURE

56. Another end remains to be achieved; and We desire that all should fully understand it. The Church from the beginning down to our own time has always followed this wise practice: let not the Gospel on being introduced into any new land destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful. For the Church, when she calls people to a higher culture and a better way of life, under the inspiration of the Christian religion, does not act like one who recklessly cuts down and uproots a thriving forest. No, she grafts a good scion upon the wild stock that it may bear a crop of more delicious fruit.

57. Although owing to Adam's fall, human nature is tainted with original sin, yet it has in itself something that is naturally Christian<sup>43</sup>; and this, if illumined by divine light and nourished by God's grace, can eventually be changed into true and supernatural virtue.

### Pagan Philosophies and Culture Perfected

58. This is the reason why the Catholic Church has neither scorned nor rejected the pagan philosophies. Instead, after freeing them from error and all contamination she has perfected and completed them by Christian revelation. So

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<sup>42</sup> A.A.S., 1926, pp. 81-82.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Tertull., *Apologet.*, cap. XVII; ML, I, 337A.

likewise the Church has graciously made her own the native art and culture which in some countries is so highly developed. She has carefully encouraged them and has brought them to a point of aesthetic perfection that of themselves they probably would never have attained. By no means has she repressed native customs and traditions but has given them a certain religious significance; she has even transformed their feast days and made them serve to commemorate the martyrs and to celebrate mysteries of the faith. In this connection, St. Basil says very well: "Just as dyers prepare the material to be dyed by certain processes beforehand and only when this has been done do they color it with purple or some other color: likewise if the unfading glory of the just is to be ours for all time we shall first be prepared by these external rites and then we shall master the teachings and mysteries of Faith. When we become accustomed to looking at the reflection of the sun in the water, we shall turn to gaze upon the sun itself . . . Certainly the essential function of a tree is to produce fruit in season; still the foliage that its branches also bear serves to adorn it. In the same way the primary fruit of the soul is truth itself; but the garb of natural culture is a welcome addition, just as leaves provide shade for the fruit and add to its beauty. Thus Moses, a man of the greatest renown for his wisdom, is said to have come to the contemplation of Him, Who is, only after being trained in Egyptian lore. So later the wise Daniel is said to have been first schooled in Babylon in the wisdom of the Chaldeans, and only then to have come to know Divine Revelation."<sup>44</sup>

### **Preserve What Is not Bound Up with Error**

59. We ourselves made the following statement in the first Encyclical Letter We wrote, *Summi Pontificatus*: "Persevering research carried out with laborious study, on the part of her missionaries of every age, has been undertaken in order to facilitate the deeper appreciative insight into the various civilizations and to utilize their good qualities to facilitate and render more fruitful the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Whatever there is in the native customs that is not inseparably bound up with superstition and

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<sup>44</sup> S. Basil., *Ad adolescentes*, 2; MG, XXXI, 567A.

error will always receive kindly consideration and, when possible, will be preserved intact.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Christian Principles Fit into Any Culture**

60. And in the discourse which We gave in 1944 to the directors of the Pontifical Missionary Society, We said: “The herald of the Gospel and messenger of Christ is an apostle. His office does not demand that he transplant European civilization and culture, and no other, to foreign soil, there to take root and propagate itself. His task in dealing with these peoples, who sometimes boast of a very old and highly developed culture of their own, is to teach and form them so that they are ready to accept willingly and in a practical manner the principles of Christian life and morality; principles, I might add, that fit into any culture, provided it be good and sound, and which give that culture greater force in safeguarding human dignity and in gaining human happiness. Catholic inhabitants of missionary countries, although they are first of all citizens of the Kingdom of God and members of His great family,<sup>46</sup> do not for all that cease to be citizens of their earthly fatherland.”<sup>47</sup>

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### **VIII. MISSION EXHIBIT “ALMOST A MIRACLE”**

61. Our Predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, in the Jubilee Year 1925, ordered a great missionary exhibition to be held; he described its striking success in the following words: “It seems almost a miracle, which gives us a new experimental proof of the vital unity and harmony of the Church of God among all nations. . . . Indeed the Exhibition was and still is like a mission encyclopedia.”<sup>48</sup>

62. From a desire to make known as widely as possible the outstanding merits of missionary endeavor, more especially in the field of culture, We also ordered that during the past Holy Year a large number of exhibits be collected, and We appointed, as you know, that they be shown publicly near the Vatican, in order to demonstrate clearly how missionaries have introduced Christian civilization into nations of advanced and less advanced culture.

<sup>45</sup> A.A.S., 1939, p. 429.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ephes. II, 19.

<sup>47</sup> A.A.S., 1944, p. 210.

<sup>48</sup> Allocution of Jan. 10th 1926.

63. This has demonstrated how much the work of the preachers of the Gospel has contributed to the development of the fine arts and of university studies. It has shown also that the Church is no obstacle to the native talent of any nation, but rather perfects it in the highest degree.

### **Increase in Influence**

64. We thank the Divine Goodness that all enthusiastically welcomed and encouraged this undertaking, which clearly proved that the missions are increasing and developing in influence and importance. Thanks to the activity of the missionaries, the Gospel spirit has been able so to imbue the minds of peoples of different customs, living in widely separated regions, that it has borne eloquent testimony of a new flowering of the fine arts. Once again it has been proved that the Christian faith, when cordially accepted and lived, is the one thing capable of inspiring the finest works of art, which works redound to the praise of the Catholic Church and lend beauty to Divine worship.

### **Mission Union of the Clergy**

65. You no doubt remember how warmly the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* recommended the Missionary Union of the Clergy, whose object is to unite the combined energy of clergy, secular and regular, and of ecclesiastical students in furthering the cause of the missions in every possible way. Having had the happiness to witness the success of this Union, as We have mentioned, We earnestly desire that it increase and spread ever more widely and arouse both priests and people to work ever more zealously for the cause of the missions. This Union is the source from which depends the success of the other Pontifical Societies of the Propagation of the Faith, of St. Peter Apostle for Native Clergy, and of the Holy Childhood. There is no need for Us at present to dwell on the importance, necessity and outstanding merits of these societies, which Our Predecessors have enriched with numerous indulgences. We fully approve that the faithful be asked to contribute generously, especially on Mission Sunday. But We desire first and foremost that all pray to Almighty God, that they help those called to missionary work, and that they join and promote as much as possible the Pontifical Societies We have mentioned.

You are quite aware, Venerable Brethren, that We recently instituted a special children's festival to help the Society of the Holy Childhood with prayers and alms. These little children of Ours are thus accustomed to pray earnestly for the salvation of the infidel; and may it be the means of sowing the seed of a missionary vocation in their innocent hearts and of fostering its growth.

### **Praise for Auxiliaries**

66. Besides, a tribute of well deserved praise must be paid to the Society which has been providentially founded to provide missionaries with what they need for the sacred ministry. We also express Our paternal approval of those societies of women who so usefully devote themselves to making vestments and altar linen. And finally We declare to all Our beloved priests of the whole Church that the work done by the faithful for the salvation of the infidel produces splendid results by way of renewing their own Faith; and an increase of virtue keeps pace with an increase in missionary zeal.

### **Charity Can be Employed in No Better Cause**

67. We should not like to conclude this Encyclical Letter without addressing Ourselves earnestly to the clergy and all the faithful to express to them particularly Our warm gratitude. We understand that this year also there is a great increase in the generous help and support given by Our children to the missions. Your charity can certainly be employed in no better cause since it is thus destined to propagate the Kingdom of Christ and to bring salvation to so many still outside the Fold. It is the Lord Himself Who "gave . . . to everyone of them commandment concerning his neighbor."<sup>49</sup>

68. In this connection the warning which We gave in Our Letter to Our beloved son Peter Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, Prefect of the S. Congregation of Propaganda Fide, on August 9, 1950, We should like to inculcate once again in view of the new danger that now threatens: "Let all the faithful . . . continue in their determination to support the

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<sup>49</sup> Ecclus., XVII, 12.

missions, multiplying their activities on their behalf, ceaselessly praying fervently to God for them, aiding missionaries and providing for their needs as far as they can.

### **The Duty of Sympathy**

69. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, in which 'if one part is suffering, all the rest suffer with it'<sup>50</sup>. Hence, since many of these members today are being tortured and maltreated, it is the sacred duty of the faithful to be united with them in a sincere and deep sympathy. In some parts of the missions the scourge of war has mercilessly razed to the ground churches and mission stations, schools and hospitals. To restore these losses and to reconstruct so many buildings, the whole Catholic world, which has proved its special care for and love of the missions, will generously furnish the necessary help."<sup>51</sup>

### **Human Race in Supreme Crisis**

70. Venerable Brethren, you are well aware that almost the whole human race is today allowing itself to be driven into two opposing camps, for Christ or against Christ. The human race is involved today in a supreme crisis, which will issue in its salvation by Christ, or in its dire destruction. The preachers of the Gospel are using their talents and energy to extend the Kingdom of Christ; but there are other preachers who, since they profess materialism and reject all hope of eternal happiness, are trying to drag men down to an abject condition.

### **Mission Actions Grow in Momentum**

71. With all the more reason, then, does the Catholic Church, most loving mother of all men, call on all her children to be zealous in helping these intrepid missionaries by their offerings, by prayer and by fostering missionary vocations. In motherly fashion she compels them to wear the livery of tender compassion,<sup>52</sup> and to take part, if not in the actual apostolate, at least by zealous cooperation, and not allow the wish of the most loving Heart of Jesus to remain un-

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<sup>50</sup> I Cor., XII, 26.

<sup>51</sup> A.A.S., 1950, pp. 727-728.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Coloss., III, 12.

realized, who "came to seek and to save what was lost"<sup>53</sup>. If they help in any way to bring the light and consolations of the Faith to one hearth, let them understand that a Divine force has been thus released, which will keep on growing in momentum throughout the ages. If they help even one candidate for the priesthood, they will fully share in all the future Masses and in all the fruits of sanctity and apostolic works that will be his. Indeed, all the faithful make up one and the same immense family who, as members of the Church militant, suffering and triumphant, share their benefits with one another. There seems to be nothing more apt than the dogma of the "Communion of Saints" for bringing home to the people the utility and importance of the missions.

### 25th Anniversary of *Rerum Ecclesiae*

72. With these paternal good wishes and the indication of timely principles and norms, We hope that on the 25th anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Ecclesiae*, all Catholics will avail themselves of this propitious occasion to ensure new and ever greater progress for the missions.

73. With this cherished hope We impart to each of you, Venerable Brethren, to all the clergy and people, and especially to those who promote this most holy cause, either at home by prayer and offerings, or by their labors in foreign lands, as a pledge of heavenly graces and of Our paternal affection, the Apostolic Benediction.

74. Given at Rome, St. Peter's, 2nd day of June, the Feast of St. Eugene I, in the year 1951, the 13th of Our Pontificate.

PIUS PP XII.

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<sup>53</sup> Luke, XIX, 10.



## NOTES

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