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APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
of
POPE PIUS XII
TO THE CLERGY OF THE
ENTIRE WORLD

*On the Development of Holiness
in Priestly Life*



National Catholic Welfare Conference

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TO THE CLERGY OF THE ENTIRE WORLD ENJOY-
ING PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE
APOSTOLIC SEE: ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF HOLINESS IN PRIESTLY LIFE.

VENERABLE BRETHREN AND BELOVED SONS,
GREETINGS AND APOSTOLIC BENEDECTION:

INTRODUCTION

1. The words of the Divine Redeemer to Peter keep coming to Our mind: "Simon, son of John, dost thou love me more than these do? . . . feed my lambs, feed my sheep";¹ and also those words spoken by the same Prince of the Apostles exhorting the Bishops and priests of his time: "Tend the flock of God which is among you . . . becoming from the heart a pattern to the flock".²

Principal Need of Our Time

2. Carefully pondering over these words, We deem it the chief duty of Our supreme ministry to do Our utmost to help to make the work of pastors and priests daily more efficacious in encouraging the faithful to avoid evil, to overcome dangers and to acquire perfection. This is all the more necessary in our days when people and nations, as a result of the recent terrible war, are not only harassed by serious material difficulties but are suffering in the depths of their souls while the enemies of Catholicism, becoming bolder, owing to the state of civil society, are striving with deadly hate and subtle snares to separate men from God and Jesus Christ.

¹ Cf. *Ioann.*, XXI, 15 et 17.

² *I Petr.*, V, 2 et 3.

Paternal Solitude for Priests

3. The necessity for this Christian renewal, which all men of good will appreciate, urges Us to turn Our thoughts and affections in a special way to the priests of the whole world because We know that their humble, vigilant and painstaking work among the people, whose difficulties, sufferings and bodily as well as spiritual needs they realize, is capable of restoring morals through the practice of the precepts of the Gospel and of establishing firmly on earth the Kingdom of Christ, "a Kingdom of justice, love and peace".³

4. But the priesthood cannot in any way procure the full effects which are demanded by the needs of the present time unless the priests shine forth among the people with the marks of sanctity, as worthy "ministers of Christ," faithful "dispensers of the mysteries of God",⁴ "God's helpers,"⁵ and ready for every noble work.⁶

Expression of Gratitude

5. We think there is no more fitting way in which We can show Our gratitude to the clergy of the world who, on the occasion of Our golden jubilee as a priest, showed their filial affection for Us by offering prayers to God on Our behalf, than by exhorting all the clergy in fatherly manner to attain that sanctity of life without which their ministry cannot be fruitful. We desire that the first fruit of the Holy Year, which We proclaimed for the renewal of morals in keeping with the teachings of the Gospel, should be that the leaders of the faithful strive to acquire greater perfection so that, thus inspired and thus prepared, they may renew in their flock the spirit of Jesus Christ.

6. It must be recalled that, even though the increasing needs of Christian society today more urgently demand personal holiness in priests, they are already obliged by the very nature of the high ministry confided to them by God to work unceasingly for their own sanctification always and everywhere.

³ Praef. Miss. in festo Iesu Christi Regis.

⁴ Cf. *I Cor.*, IV, 1.

⁵ Cf. *I Cor.*, III, 9.

⁶ Cf. *II Tim.*, III, 17.

The Great Gift of the Priesthood

7. As our predecessors taught, especially Pius X⁷ and Pius XI⁸, and as We referred to in the encyclicals *Mystici Corporis*⁹ and *Mediator Dei*¹⁰, the priesthood is a great gift of the Divine Redeemer, Who, in order to perpetuate the work of redemption of the human race which He completed on the Cross, confided His powers to the Church which He wished to be a participator in His unique and everlasting Priesthood. The priest is like "another Christ" because he is marked with an indelible character making him, as it were, a living image of our Saviour. The priest represents Christ Who said "As the Father has sent me, I also send you";¹¹ "he who hears you, hears me".¹² Admitted to this most sublime ministry by a call from heaven, "he is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins".¹³ To him must come anyone who wishes to live the life of the Divine Redeemer and who desires to receive strength, comfort and nourishment for his soul; from him the salutary medicine must be sought by anyone who wishes to rise from sin and lead a good life. Hence all priests may apply to themselves with full right the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "We are God's helpers".¹⁴

8. This lofty dignity demands from priests that they react to their exalted office with the strictest fidelity. Since they are destined to promote the glory of God on earth and to cherish and increase the Mystical Body of Christ, they must be outstanding by the sanctity of their lives in order that through them the "fragrance of Christ" may be spread everywhere.¹⁵

The Fundamental Duty

9. Beloved sons, on the very day that you were raised to the sacerdotal dignity, the Bishop, in the name of God, solemnly pointed out to you your fundamental duty in the

⁷ *Exhortatio Haerent animo; Acta Pii X*, vol. IV, p. 237 sq.

⁸ *Litt Enc. Ad catholici sacerdotii*, A.A.S., XXVIII, 1936, p. 5 sq.

⁹ A.A.S., XXXV, 1943, p. 193 sq.

¹⁰ A.A.S., XXXIX, 1947, p. 521 sq.

¹¹ Ioann., XX, 21.

¹² Luc., X, 16.

¹³ *Hebr.*, V, 1.

¹⁴ *I Cor.*, III, 9.

¹⁵ *II Cor.*, II, 15.

following words: "Understand what you do, imitate the things you deal with; and celebrating the mystery of the death of the Lord, strive to mortify in your members all vice and concupiscence. May your doctrine be the spiritual medicine for the people of God; let the fragrance of your life of virtue be an ornament of the Church of Christ; and by your preaching and example may you build the house, that is the family of God".¹⁶ Your life, which should be completely immune from sin, should be even more hidden with Christ in God¹⁷ than the lives of Christian layfolk. Advance then, thus adorned with that high virtue which your dignity demands, to the work of completing the redemption of man for which your priestly ordination has destined you.

10. This is the undertaking which you have freely and spontaneously assumed; be holy because, as you know, your ministry is holy.

PART I. SANCTITY OF LIFE

Perfection Consists in Fervent Charity

11. According to the teaching of the Divine Master, the perfection of Christian life consists especially in the love of God and of one's neighbor,¹⁸ a love that is fervent, devoted, and painstaking. If it has these qualities it can be said to embrace all virtues;¹⁹ and can rightly be called the "bond of perfection".²⁰ In whatever circumstances a man is placed he should direct his intentions and his actions towards this end.

The Priest is Called to Perfection

12. However, the priest is bound to do this by his very office. By its very nature every priestly action necessarily tends to this end since the priest is called to this by divine vocation, destined for it by his divine office and confirmed by a divine grace. For he must cooperate with Christ, the only and eternal Priest; he must follow Him and imitate

¹⁶ *Pontificale Rom.*, De ord. presbyt.

¹⁷ Cf. *Col.*, III, 3.

¹⁸ Cf. *Matth.*, XXII, 37, 38, 39.

¹⁹ Cf. *I Cor.*, XIII, 4, 5, 6, 7.

²⁰ *Col.*, III, 14

Him, Who during His life on earth had no other purpose than to bear witness to His most ardent love for His Father and to bestow on men the infinite treasures of His Heart.

IMITATION OF CHRIST

Intimate Union with Jesus

13. The first striving of a priestly soul should be towards the closest union with the Divine Redeemer, towards the complete and humble acceptance of the precepts of Christian doctrine, and towards such a diligent application of those precepts at every moment of his life that his faith will illumine his conduct and his conduct will be a reflection of his faith.

14. Led by the light of this virtue, let him keep his eyes fixed on Christ. Let him follow closely His Teaching, His actions and His example, convincing himself that it is not sufficient for him to accomplish the duties enjoined on the ordinary faithful. He must strive with ever increasing efforts to tend to perfection of life in keeping with the high dignity of the priesthood according to the warning of the Church: "Clerics must live both interiorly and exteriorly a holier life than lay people, and must excel them in giving an example of virtue and good deeds".²¹

15. The priestly life, since it arises from Christ should always and in everything be directed towards Him. Christ is the Word of God and did not disdain to assume human nature. He lived a life on earth in order to obey the will of the Eternal Father. He spread around Himself the fragrance of the lily. He lived in poverty, and "went about doing good and healing all".²² Finally, He offered Himself as a victim for the salvation of His brethren. That, beloved sons, is the summary of the wonderful life proposed to you. Strive with all your strength to reproduce it in yourselves and recall His words of exhortation: "For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also should do".²³

The Practice of Humility

16. The beginning of Christian perfection stems from humility. "Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of

²¹ *C.I.C.*, can. 124.

²² *Act. Ap.*, X, 38.

²³ *Ioann.*, XIII, 15.

heart".²⁴ The consideration of the high dignity to which we are called by Baptism and Holy Orders and the knowledge of our own spiritual need ought to induce us to meditate on the words of Christ: "Without Me you can do nothing".²⁵

Distrust of Self

17. Let the priest not trust in his own strength nor be complacent in his own gifts nor seek the esteem and praise of men but let him imitate Christ, Who "did not come to be served but to serve",²⁶ let him deny himself according to the teaching of the Gospel,²⁷ detaching himself from the things of the earth in order to follow the Divine Master more easily and more readily. Whatever he has, whatever he is, is due to the goodness and power of God; if he wishes to glory in this let him remember the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "For myself I will glory in nothing save in my infirmities".²⁸

Immolation of the Will

18. The spirit of humility, illumined by faith, disposes the soul to the immolation of the will by means of obedience. Christ Himself established in the society He founded a legitimate authority which is a continuation of His own. Hence he who obeys the authorities of the church is obeying the Redeemer Himself.

The Necessity of Obedience

19. In an age like ours, in which the principle of authority is grievously disturbed, it is absolutely necessary that the priest, keeping the precepts of faith firmly in mind, should consider and duly accept this same authority, not only as the bulwark of the social and religious order, but also as the foundation of his own personal sanctification. While the enemies of God, with criminal astuteness, are trying to incite and solicit people's unruly passions, to make them rise up against the commands of Holy Mother Church, We wish to give due praise to, and animate with paternal

²⁴ Matth., XI, 29.

²⁵ Ioann., XV, 5.

²⁶ Matth., XX, 28.

²⁷ Cf. Matth., XVI, 24.

²⁸ II Cor., XII, 5.

encouragement that vast army of ministers of God, who, in order to manifest openly their Christian obedience and to preserve intact their fidelity to Christ and to the legitimate authority established by Him, "have been counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus",²⁹ and not only disgrace, but persecutions and prison and even death.

Celibacy

20. The priest has as the proper field of his activity everything that pertains to the supernatural life, since it is he who promotes the increase of this supernatural life and communicates it to the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is necessary that he renounce "the things of the world," in order to have care only for "the things of the Lord".³⁰ And it is precisely because he should be free from preoccupation with worldly things to dedicate himself entirely to the divine service, that the Church has established the law of celibacy, thus making it ever more manifest to all peoples that the priest is a minister of God and the father of souls. By his law of celibacy, the priest, so far from losing the gift and duties of fatherhood, rather increases them immeasurably, for, although he does not beget progeny for this passing life of earth, he begets children for that life which is heavenly and eternal.

21. The more resplendent priestly chastity is, so much the more does the sacred minister become, together with Christ, "a pure victim, a holy victim, an immaculate victim".³¹

22. In order carefully to preserve unstained this inestimable treasure of our chastity, it is suitable and necessary to be obedient to that exhortation of the Prince of Apostles, which we daily repeat in the Divine Office, "Be ye sober, and watch".³²

Vigilance and Prayer the Safeguards of Chastity

23. Yes, watch, beloved sons, because priestly chastity is exposed to so many dangers, whether by reason of laxity in public morals, or because of the allurements of vice which you find so easily seductive in these days, or, finally,

²⁹ *Acta Ap.*, V, 41.

³⁰ *I Cor.*, VII, 32, 33.

³¹ *Missale Rom.*, can.

³² *I Petr.*, V, 8.

because of that excessive liberty in relations between the sexes which at times dares to insinuate itself even into the exercise of the sacred ministry. "Watch and pray",³³ mindful that your hands touch those things which are most holy, that you have been consecrated to God and are to serve Him alone. The very habit which you wear, reminds you that you should live not to the world, but to God. Therefore, trusting in the protection of the Virgin Mother of God, generously make every effort to preserve yourselves "clean, unstained, pure and chaste, as becomes the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."³⁴

Avoidance of Familiarity

24. To this end We deem it opportune to address to you a special exhortation as regards your direction of associations and sodalities of women, that you show yourselves as becomes a priest; avoid every familiarity; when you must give your services, give them in a way that is befitting sacred ministers. Moreover, in directing these associations, let your interest be confined to the demands of the sacred ministry.

Detachment from Worldly Possessions

25. Nor should you consider it sufficient to renounce earthly pleasures through chastity and to submit in generous obedience to your superiors; to these you must also unite daily a detachment of your hearts from riches and from the things of earth. Reverently take as your models those great saints of ancient and modern times who joined this essential detachment from material goods to a profound trust in Divine Providence and a most ardent priestly zeal; as a result, they produced works that are truly marvelous, confiding solely in God who, assuredly, is never found wanting in our needs. Even priests who do not make a profession of poverty by a special vow, must always be guided by the love of this virtue, a love that ought to show itself in the simplicity and modesty of their manner of life, in their living quarters, and in their generosity to the poor. Let them especially refrain from those economic enterprises which would impede the fulfillment of

³³ Marc., XIV, 38.

³⁴ *Pontificale Rom.*, In ordin. Diacon.

their pastoral duties, and lessen the respect which is due to them from the faithful. Since it is the office of the priest to spend every effort to obtain the salvation of souls, he must apply to himself those words of St. Paul, "I do not seek yours, but you".³⁵

The Priest a Model of All Virtues

26. Many things occur to Our mind which We might say if there were an opportunity here of giving a detailed treatment of all the virtues by which the priest should reproduce in himself as faithfully as possible the Divine Model, Jesus Christ. But We have chosen to concentrate Our attention on those things which seemed to be specially necessary in our times. As for other virtues, let it suffice that We now recall to your minds the words of that golden book, *The Imitation of Christ*, "The priest should be adorned with all the virtues, and give an example to others of a righteous life. Let his conversation be not according to the common and vulgar ways of men, but with the angels and with men that are perfect".³⁶

NECESSITY OF GRACE FOR SANCTIFICATION

27. Everyone knows, beloved brethren, that it is impossible for a Christian and, in a special way, a priest, to imitate the admirable example of the Divine Master in daily life without the help of grace, and without the use of those instruments of grace which He Himself has placed at our disposal: a use which is as much more necessary as the grade of perfection to which we are bound to attain is higher, and as the difficulties which arise from our natural inclination to evil are greater. For this reason, We judge it opportune to pass on to the consideration of certain other truths, as sublime as they are consoling, from which should appear still more clearly how deep should be the sanctity of the priest, and how efficacious are the helps given to us by the Lord to enable us to fulfill in ourselves the designs of His divine mercy.

The Priest's Life a Life of Sacrifice

28. As the whole life of the Saviour was directed toward the sacrifice of Himself, so the life of the priest, which

³⁵ *II Cor.*, XII, 14.

³⁶ *De imit. Christi*, IV, c. 5, v. 13, 14.

should reproduce in itself the image of Christ, ought also to be with Him, and through Him, and in Him, a pleasing sacrifice.

After the Example of Jesus on Calvary

29. Indeed, the sacrifice which the Lord made upon Calvary, hanging on the cross, was not only the immolation of His own Body; for He offered Himself, a Victim of expiation, as the Head of the human race and, therefore, "while commending His Spirit into the hands of the Father, He commends Himself to God as man, in order to commend to the Eternal Father all mankind".³⁷

. . . and in Holy Mass

30. The very same thing occurs in the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, which is the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross: Christ offers Himself to the Eternal Father for His glory and for our salvation. And in so far as He, the Priest and Victim, acts in His capacity as Head of the Church, He offers and immolates not only Himself, but all Christians, and in a certain manner, all of mankind.³⁸

The Treasures of the Eucharistic Sacrifice

31. Now if this holds true for all Christians, much more does it hold for priests, who are the ministers of Christ, principally in order to celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice. And precisely in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, when "in the person of Christ", he consecrates bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of Christ, the priest can draw from that same fountain of the supernatural life the inexhaustible treasures of salvation and all those helps which he needs for himself personally and for the fulfillment of his mission.

Living the Mass

32. Being in such close contact with the divine mysteries, the priest cannot but be hungry and thirsty after justice,³⁹ or not feel inspired to assimilate his life to his exalted dignity, and orient his life towards that sacrifice in which he must needs offer and immolate himself with Christ. Consequently, he will not merely celebrate Holy Mass, but

³⁷ S. ATHANAS., *De incarnatione*, n. 12: Migne, P.G., XXVI. 1003s.

³⁸ Cf. S. Aug., *De civitate Dei*; 1. X, c. 6: Migne, P.L., XLI, 284.

³⁹ Cf. Matth., V, 6.

will live it out intimately in his daily life; in no other way can he obtain that supernatural vigor which will transform him and make him a sharer in the life of sacrifice of the Redeemer.

Being a Victim with Jesus

33. St. Paul sets down as the basic principle of Christian perfection, the precept, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ".⁴⁰ Again if this precept applies to all Christians, it applies in a particular way to priests. But putting on Jesus Christ does not mean merely adapting one's mind to His doctrine; it means that a person enters upon a new life which, in order to shine with the splendor of Thabor, must first be conformed to the sufferings and trials of our Redeemer suffering on Calvary. This involves long and arduous labor, by which the soul is transformed to the state of victim, in order that it may participate intimately in the sacrifice of Christ. However, this arduous and assiduous labor is not to be accomplished through empty velleity, nor achieved through mere desires and promises; it must be an indefatigable and continuous exercise, which aims at a fruitful renovation of spirit; it must be an exercise of piety, which refers all things to the glory of God; it must be an exercise of penance, which tempers and checks the immoderate movements of the soul; it must be an act of charity, which inflames the soul with love of God and the neighbor, and which effectuates works of mercy; it must, in fine, be that active and ready willingness by which we strive and struggle to accomplish whatsoever is most perfect.

The Admonition of St. Peter Chrysologus

34. The priest should, therefore, study to reproduce in his own soul the things that are effected upon the Altar. As Jesus Christ immolates Himself, so His minister should be immolated with Him; as Jesus expiates the sins of men, so he, by following the hard road of Christian asceticism, should labor at the purification of himself and of others. Hence the admonition of St. Peter Chrysologus: "Be you the priest and the sacrifice of God; do not lose that which has been given to you by the authority of God. Clothe yourself with the garment of sanctity, gird yourself with the cincture of chastity; let Christ be the covering for

⁴⁰ *Rom.*, XIII, 14.

your head; let the cross of Christ be the protection before your face; instill in your breast the sacrament of divine wisdom; constantly burn the incense of prayer; grasp the sword of the Spirit; let your heart be, as it were, an altar, on which you may safely offer your body as a victim to God . . . Offer Him your faith, for the chastisement of perfidy; offer Him your fasting, that gluttony may cease; offer your chastity as a sacrifice that passion may die; place on the Altar your piety, that impiety be put away; call upon mercy, that avarice may be overcome; and that folly may disappear, the immolation of sanctity is called for. In this way shall your body be also your victim, if it has not been wounded by any dart of sin".⁴¹

Mystical Death in Christ

35. We wish to repeat here in a special manner for priests, what We have already proposed to the meditation of all the faithful in the Encyclical *Mediator Dei*: "It is quite true that Christ is a priest; but He is a priest not for Himself but for us, when in the name of the whole human race He offers our prayers and religious homage to the eternal Father; He is also a victim since He substitutes Himself for sinful man. Now the exhortation of the Apostle, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,' requires that all Christians should possess, as far as is humanly possible, the same dispositions as those which the divine Redeemer had when He offered Himself in sacrifice: that is to say, they should, in a humble attitude of mind, pay adoration, honor, praise and thanksgiving to the supreme majesty of God. Moreover, it means that they must assume to some extent the character of a victim, that they deny themselves as the Gospel commands, that freely and of their own accord they do penance and that each detests and satisfies for his sins. It means, in a word, that we must all undergo with Christ a mystical death on the cross so that we can apply to ourselves the words of St. Paul, 'With Christ I am nailed to the cross.'"

The Riches of the Blood of Christ

36. Priests and beloved sons, we hold in our hands a great treasure, a precious pearl, the inexhaustible riches of the

⁴¹ *Sermo CVIII*s Migne, *P.L.*, *LII*, 500, 501.

⁴² *A.A.S.*, *XXXIX*, 1947, pp. 552, 553.

Blood of Jesus Christ; let us use them even to prodigality, so that, by the complete sacrifice of ourselves offered with Christ to the Eternal Father, we may become, in truth, mediators of justice, "in the things which appertain to God",⁴³ and that we may deserve to have our prayers accepted and obtain a super-abundance of graces which may refresh and make more fruitful the Church and the souls of all men. Only when we have become one with Christ through His oblation and ours and when we have raised our voice with the choir of the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, as we read, "We join ourselves in song with them, our hopes in Holy Sion,"⁴⁴ only then, strengthened by the virtue of our Savior, shall we be able to descend in safety from the heights of sanctity to which we have attained, to bring to all men the life and the light of God by means of our priestly ministry.

NECESSITY OF PRAYER AND PIETY

The Obligation of the Divine Office

37. Perfect sanctity also demands a continual communication with God; and because this intimate contact which the priestly soul should enjoy with God, ought never be interrupted in the succession of days and hours, the Church obliges the priest to recite the Divine Office. In this manner, she has been faithfully obedient to the injunction of the Lord, "That they must always pray and not lose heart".⁴⁵

38. Just as the Church herself never ceases praying, so she ardently desires that her children should do the same, repeating the words of the Apostle, "Through Him (Jesus), therefore, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise always to God, that is, fruit of lips praising His name".⁴⁶ To priests, she has committed the special duty of consecrating to God, praying also in the name of the people, every period of the day and every circumstance of life.

⁴³ *Hebr.*, V, 1.

⁴⁴ *Brev. Rom.*, Hymn. pro. off. Dedic. Eccl.

⁴⁵ *Luc.*, XVIII, 1.

⁴⁶ *Hebr.*, XIII, 15

The Voice of Christ and of the Church

39. Obedient to this duty, the priest continues to do down the course of the ages, that which Christ Himself had done, who "in the days of His earthly life, with a loud cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications . . . and was heard because of His reverent submission".⁴⁷ This prayer has, without doubt, a singular efficacy because it is done in the name of Christ, "through our Lord Jesus Christ," who is our Mediator with the Father, presenting to Him incessantly, His own satisfaction, His merits, and the infinite price of His Blood. It is truly "the voice of Christ," who "prays for us as our Priest, prays among us as our Head".⁴⁸ By the same token, it is always "the voice of the Church," which takes up the sentiments and desires of all the faithful who unite their voices to the prayers and faith of the priest in praising Jesus Christ and, through Him, render thanks to the Eternal Father, obtaining from Him the assistance which they need in their lives every day and every hour. In this wise there is repeated daily, by means of the priests, what Moses once did on the mountain top, when, with his arms lifted up to heaven, he spoke to God and earnestly begged of Him mercy and favor for his people, who were suffering trials in the valley below.

The Divine Office, a means of Sanctification

40. Moreover, the Divine Office is a most efficacious means of sanctification. Certainly it is not a mere recitation of formularies or of artistically executed chants; it is not just a question of respect for certain norms, called rubrics, or for external ceremonies of worship; it is above all a matter of elevating the mind and heart to God, in unison with the blessed spirits,⁴⁹ who eternally sing praises to God. Therefore, the canonical hours should be recited "worthily, attentively, and with devotion", as we are reminded at the beginning of the Office.

Having the same intentions as Christ

41. Consequently, the priest ought to pray with the same intention as the Redeemer. So that his voice is, as it were,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 7.

⁴⁸ S. Aug., *Ennar. in Ps. LXXXV*, n. 1: Migne, *P.L.*, XXXVII, 1081.

⁴⁹ Cf. Litt. Enc. *Mediator Dei*: A.A.S., XXXIX, 1947, p. 574.

the voice of the Lord who, by means of the priest, continues to implore from the most merciful Father the benefits of the Redemption; it is the very voice of the Lord with which are associated the armies of the angels and saints in heaven and of all the faithful on earth, to render due glory to God; it is the voice of Christ our Advocate, by which we receive the immense treasure of His merits.

42. Meditate with care and attention on these fertile truths which the Holy Spirit has disclosed to us in the Sacred Scriptures and upon which the writings of the Fathers and Doctors are commentary explanations. As your lips repeat the words dictated by the Holy Spirit, try not to lose anything of this great treasure, and, that your souls may be responsive to the voice of God, put away from your minds with all effort and zeal whatever might distract you and recollect your thoughts, that you may thus more easily and with greater fruit attend to the contemplation of the eternal truths.

The Liturgical Cycle

43. In the Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, We have explained at great length why the Church, through the course of the liturgical year, recalls to mind and represents before our eyes, in orderly fashion, all the mysteries of Jesus Christ and bids us celebrate the feasts of the Virgin Mary and of the Saints. Those lessons, which We there imparted to all Christians because they are eminently useful for all, should be especially meditated upon by you priests; you, who through the Sacrifice of the Eucharist and the Divine Office, play such an important role in the development of the liturgical cycle.

Spiritual Exercises

44. In order that we may progress all the more speedily day by day along the road of sanctity, the Church heartily recommends to us, besides the celebration of Mass and the recitation of the Divine Office, also other exercises of piety. Regarding these, it is in place here to propose certain points for your consideration.

Meditation on Eternal Truths

45. Above all else, the Church exhorts us to the practice of meditation, which raises the mind to the contemplation

of heavenly things, which influences the heart with love of God and guides it on the straight path to Him. This meditation on sacred things offers the best means of preparation before and of thanksgiving after the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Meditation also disposes the soul to savor and to comprehend the beauties of the liturgy, and leads us to the contemplation of the eternal verities, and of the marvelous examples and teachings of the Gospel.

... And on the Mysteries of the Life of Jesus

46. It behooves the sacred ministers, therefore, to strive to reproduce in themselves the examples of the Gospel and the virtues of the Divine Redeemer. However, just as the food of the body does not nourish, sustain or develop our life unless, after being digested and assimilated, it be changed into our own substance, so the priest cannot acquire dominion over himself and his senses, cannot purify his spirit, cannot strive for virtue as he should, cannot, in brief, fulfill faithfully, generously, or fruitfully the duties of his sacred ministry, unless his life becomes one with the life of the Lord through assiduous and unceasing meditation on the mysteries of the Divine Redeemer, the supreme model of perfection and the inexhaustible source of sanctity.

Serious Consequences of Omitting Meditation

47. We therefore consider it Our grave duty to exhort you in a special manner to the practice of daily meditation, a practice recommended to all the clergy also by Canon Law.⁵⁰ For just as the desire for priestly perfection is nourished and strengthened by daily meditation, so its neglect is the source of distaste for spiritual things, through which piety is lessened and grows languid, and the impulse towards personal sanctification is not only weakened or ceases altogether, but the entire priestly ministry suffers great harm. It must therefore be stated without reservation that no other means has the unique efficacy of meditation, and that, as a consequence, its daily practice can in no wise be substituted for.

Vocal Prayer and the Spirit of Prayer

48. From mental prayer cannot be separated vocal prayer, and those other forms of private prayer which, accord-

⁵⁰ Cf. can. 125, 2°.

ing to each one's peculiar needs, help in uniting the soul with God. Let this be remembered, however: more than a mere multiplicity of prayers, is to be valued piety and the true and ardent spirit of prayer. If ever before, in our days especially is this ardent spirit of prayer necessary, when the so-called "naturalism" has invaded men's minds and hearts, and when virtue is exposed to every kind of danger, dangers which not infrequently meet one in the very exercise of one's ministry. Is there anything which can more securely protect you against these snares, anything which can more surely elevate your souls to heavenly things and keep them united with God, than assiduous prayer and supplication for Divine help?

Devotion to the Blessed Mother

49. Inasmuch as priests can be called by a very special title, sons of the Virgin Mary, they will never cease to love her with an ardent piety, invoke her with perfect confidence, and frequently implore her strong protection. So that every day, as the Church herself recommends,⁵¹ they will recite the holy rosary, which, by proposing for our meditation the mysteries of the Redeemer, leads us "to Jesus through Mary."

Daily Visit to the Blessed Sacrament

50. Also, before closing his day's work, the priest will betake himself to the Tabernacle, and spend at least a little time there to adore Jesus in the Sacrament of His love, to make reparation for the ingratitude of so many men, to enkindle in himself ever more the love of God, and to remain, in some sense, even during the time of repose at night, which recalls to our minds the silence of death, present in His Most Sacred Heart.

Examination of Conscience and Frequent Confession

51. Let him also not omit his daily examination of conscience which is undoubtedly the most efficacious means we have for taking account of the conduct of our spiritual life during the day, for removing the obstacles which hinder or retard one's progress in virtue, and finally, for determining on the most suitable means to assure to our sacred ministry greater fruitfulness and to implore from the

⁵¹ Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 125, 2.

Heavenly Father indulgence upon so many of our deeds wretchedly done.

52. This indulgence and the remission of our sins are given to us in a special manner in the Sacrament of Penance, the masterpiece of God's goodness, by which our weakness is fortified. Let it never happen that the very minister of this Sacrament of reconciliation, himself does not use it. The Church, as you know, declares as follows in this respect: "Let The Ordinaries be vigilant to see that all their clergy frequently cleanse the stains of their conscience in the Sacrament of Penance".⁵² Though we are the ministers of Christ, we are, nevertheless, wretched and weak; how then can we ascend to the Altar and handle the Sacred Mysteries unless we make a frequent effort to expiate our sins and cleanse ourselves? By means of frequent Confession, "The right knowledge of one's self is increased, Christian humility is developed, perverse moral habits are uprooted, negligence and spiritual torpor are resisted, the conscience is purified, the will is fortified, salutary self-control is obtained, and an increase of grace is secured by the very fact that the Sacrament is received".⁵³

Spiritual Direction

53. Still another recommendation, we feel, is in place here: that, in undertaking and advancing in the spiritual life, you do not trust too much to yourselves, but with docile simplicity seek and accept the help of someone who, with wise moderation, can guide your soul, point out to you the dangers, suggest suitable remedies, and in every internal and external difficulty can guide you in the right way towards an ever greater perfection, according to the example of the saints and the teachings of Christian asceticism. Without these prudent guides for one's conscience, it is often very difficult to be duly responsive to the impulses of the Holy Spirit and of the grace of God.

Retreats

54. Finally, We wish to recommend heartily to all the practice of Retreats. When we seclude ourselves for some days from our accustomed occupations and habitual en-

⁵² C.I.C., can. 125, 1°.

⁵³ Litt. Enc. *Mystici Corporis Christi*: A.A.S., XXXV, 1943, p. 235.

vironment, and retire into solitude and silence, we are then more attentive to give ear to the voice of God, which consequently penetrates more deeply into our soul. Retreats, while they call us to a more holy fulfillment of the duties of our ministry, and to the contemplation of the Mysteries of the Redeemer, give new strength to our will, that we may "serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice before Him all our days".⁵⁴

PART II. THE HOLINESS OF THE SACRED MINISTRY

55. The Redeemer's Side was pierced on Mount Calvary and from it flowed His Precious Blood running like a torrent in flood through the centuries to cleanse men's consciences, expiate their sins, impart to them the treasures of salvation.

The Priest as Dispenser of the Mysteries of God

56. It is the priests who are destined to carry out this mystery so sublime. Not only do they procure and communicate Christ's grace to the members of His Mystical Body, but they are also the organs whereby this Mystical Body develops because they must ever give the Church new sons, bring them up, educate them, and guide them. Priests are "the stewards of the mysteries of God"⁵⁵; therefore they must serve Jesus Christ with perfect charity and consecrate all their strength to the salvation of their brethren. They are the apostles of light; therefore they must illuminate the world with the teachings of the Gospel and be so strong in the Christian faith as to be able to communicate it to others, and follow the example and doctrine of the Divine Master in order to lead everyone to Him. They are the apostles of grace and pardon: therefore they must consecrate themselves entirely to the salvation of men and draw them to the altar of God in order that they may nourish themselves with the bread of eternal life. They are the apostles of charity: therefore they must promote works of charity, all the more urgent today when the needs of the indigent have grown enormously.

⁵⁴ Luc., I, 74, 75.

⁵⁵ I Cor., IV, 1.

Various Forms of the Modern Apostolate

57. The priest must also strive to see that the faithful have a correct understanding of the doctrine of the "Communion of Saints," and that they feel and live it. For this purpose let him zealously recommend those institutions known as the Liturgical Apostolate and the Apostleship of Prayer. In like manner, he must promote all those forms of the apostolate which today, on account of the special needs of the Christian people, are so very important and urgent. Let him, therefore, labor most diligently for the diffusion of instruction in the Catechism, the development and diffusion of Catholic Action and Missionary Action, and, with the assistance of well prepared and trained laymen, let him increase those projects of the social apostolate which are demanded by our time.

Union With Christ in Apostolic Work

58. But the priest must remember that the closer he is united to Christ and guided in his activities by the spirit of Christ, the more fruitful his ministry will be. Thus, his priestly work will not be reduced to a purely natural activity which tires the body and mind and draws the priest himself away from the right path with no little detriment both to himself and to the Church. But his work and his labor will be fruitful and corroborated by those gifts of grace that God denies to the proud but concedes generously to those working humbly in "the Vineyard of the Lord," not seeking themselves and their own interests⁵⁶ but the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Hence, faithful to the teaching of the Gospel, let him not trust in himself, as we have said, and in his own strength but let him place his faith in the help of the Lord. "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God Who gives the growth".⁵⁷

59. When the apostolate is directed and inspired in this manner, it is impossible that the priest should not attract the souls of everyone to himself with an almost divine strength. By his reproducing in his habits and his life a living image of Christ, all those who turn to him as a master will recognize, thanks to some inward conviction, that the

⁵⁶ Cf. *I Cor.*, X, 33.

⁵⁷ *I Cor.*, III, 7.

words he speaks are not his but God's and that he does not act of his own accord but by the virtue of God: "If anyone speaks, let it be as with words of God. If anyone ministers, let it be as from the strength that God furnishes . . ." ⁵⁸ In striving towards holiness and in exercising his ministry with the greatest diligence, the priest must spend himself to represent Christ so perfectly as, in all modesty, to be able to repeat the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ".⁵⁹

The Heresy of Action

60. For these reasons, while giving due praise to those who in the years which have followed the long and terrible war, urged by the love of God and of doing good to their neighbor under the guidance and following the example of their Bishops, have consecrated their entire strength to the relief of so much misery, We cannot abstain from expressing our pre-occupation and our anxiety for those who on account of the special circumstances of the moment have become so engulfed in the vortex of external activity that they neglect the chief duty of the priest, his own sanctification. We have already stated publicly in writing ⁶⁰ that those who presume that the world can be saved by what has been rightly called "the heresy of action" must be made to exercise better judgment. The heresy of action is that activity which is not based upon the help of grace and does not make constant use of the means necessary to the pursuit of sanctity given us by Christ. In the same way, nevertheless, We have deemed it timely to stimulate to the activities of the ministry those who, shut up in themselves and almost diffident of the efficacy of divine aid, do not labor to the best of their ability to make the spirit of Christianity penetrate daily life in all those ways demanded by our times.⁶¹

Complete Consecration to the Salvation of Souls

61. We earnestly exhort you, therefore, to labor with all solicitude for the salvation of those whom Providence has entrusted to your care, closely united to the Redeemer with

⁵⁸ *I Petr.*, IV, 11.

⁵⁹ *I Cor.*, IV, 16.

⁶⁰ Cf. A.A.S., XXXVI, 1944, p. 239; Epist. *Cum proxime exeat*.

⁶¹ Cf. *Orat. die XII mensis sept. a. MCMXXXVII habitam*.

whose strength we can do all things.⁶² How ardently We desire, O beloved sons, that you emulate those saints who in past times, by their great deeds, have shown what the might of Divine Grace can do in this world. May you one and all, in humility and sincerity, always be able to attribute to yourselves—with your spiritual charges as witnesses—the words of the Apostle, “But I will most gladly for my part, spend and be spent myself for your souls”.⁶³ Enlighten the minds, guide the consciences, comfort and sustain the souls who are struggling with doubt and groaning with sorrow. To these forms of apostolate, add also all those others which the needs of the times demand. But let it always be clear to everybody that the priest in all his activities seeks nothing beyond the good of souls, and looks toward no one but Christ to Whom he consecrates his energies and his whole self.

Following the Example of the Redeemer

62. In the same way that, in order to urge you to personal sanctification, We have exhorted you to reproduce in yourselves the living image of Christ, so now for the sanctifying efficacy of your ministry We excite you to follow constantly the example of the Divine Redeemer. Full of the Holy Ghost, He “went about doing good and healing all who were in the power of the devil; for God was with Him”.⁶⁴ Strengthened by the same Spirit and encouraged by His Strength, you will be able to exercise a ministry which, nourished and enkindled by Christian charity, will be rich in Divine virtue and capable of communicating this virtue to others. May your apostolic zeal be animated by that divine charity which bears everything with peace of mind, which does not let itself be overcome by adversity, and which embraces all, rich and poor, friends and enemies, faithful and unfaithful. This daily effort and these daily hardships are demanded of you by souls for whose salvation Our Saviour patiently suffered grief and torment unto death in order to restore us to the Divine Friendship. This is, and well you know it, the greatest good of all. Do not allow yourselves, therefore, to be carried away by the immoderate desire for success, do not allow yourselves to be

⁶² Cf. *Philipp.*, IV, 13.

⁶³ *II Cor.*, XII, 15.

⁶⁴ *Acta Ap.*, X, 38.

dismayed if, after assiduous labor, you do not gather the desired fruits. "One sows, another reaps".⁶⁵

Charity in Apostolic Work

63. Furthermore, let your apostolic zeal shine with benign charity. If it be necessary—and it is everyone's duty—to fight error and repel vice, the soul of the priest must be ever open to compassion. Error must be fought with all our might, but the brother who errs must be loved intensely and brought to salvation. How much good have the saints not done, how many admirable deeds have they not performed by their kindness even in circumstances and in environments penetrated by lies and degraded by vice? Of a truth, he who to please men would gloss over their evil inclinations or be indulgent about their incorrect ways of thinking or acting, thereby prejudicing Christian teaching and integrity of morals, would be betraying his ministry. But when the teachings of the Gospel are preserved and those who stray are moved by the sincere desire to return to the right path, the priest must remember the reply of Our Lord to St. Peter when he asks Him how many times he must forgive his neighbor. "I do not say to thee seven times, but seventy times seven".⁶⁶

Disinterestedness

64. The object of your zeal must not be earthly and transient things but things eternal. The resolution of priests aspiring to holiness must be this: to labor solely for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. How many priests, even in the straitened circumstances of our time, have taken the example and the warnings of the Apostle of the Gentiles as a rule of conduct! The Apostle of the Gentiles, content with the indispensable minimum, declared: ". . . but having food and sufficient clothing, with these let us be content".⁶⁷

65. Through this disinterestedness and this detachment from earthly things worthy of the highest praise, in conjunction with trust in Divine Providence, the priestly ministry has given the Church ripe fruits of spiritual and social good.

⁶⁵ Ioann., IV, 37.

⁶⁶ Matth., XVIII, 22.

⁶⁷ I Tim., VI, 8.

Increasing Knowledge and Zeal

66. Finally, this industrious zeal must be illuminated by the light of wisdom and discipline and inflamed by the fire of charity. Whoever sets before himself his own sanctification and that of other people must be equipped with solid learning that comprises not only theology but also the results of modern science and discovery so that, like a good father, he may draw "from his storeroom things new and old"⁶⁸ and make his ministry always more appreciated and fruitful. In the first place, let your activities be inspired by and remain faithful to the prescriptions of this Apostolic See and the directives of the Bishops. May it never happen, beloved sons, that those new forms and methods of the apostolate, so opportune today especially in regions where the clergy is not sufficiently numerous, remain dead or, through poor direction, not correspond to the needs of the faithful.

67. May your zeal increase every day, therefore, sustain the Church of God, be an example to the faithful, and constitute a powerful bulwark against which the assaults of the enemies of God may be broken.

Satisfaction with Spiritual Directors

68. We desire likewise, in this paternal exhortation of Ours, to give special mention to those priests who, in humility and burning charity, labor prudently for the sanctification of their brother-priests as counsellors, confessors, or spiritual directors. The incalculable good they render the Church remains hidden for the greater part, but it will one day be revealed in the glory of God's kingdom.

The Example of St. Giuseppe Cafasso

69. Not many years ago, with great satisfaction, We decreed the honors of the altar to the Turinese priest, Giuseppe Cafasso who, as you know, in a most difficult period, was the wise and holy spiritual guide of not a few priests whom he helped to progress in virtue and whose sacred ministry he rendered particularly fruitful. We are fully confident that, through his powerful patronage, our Divine Redeemer will raise up many priests of like sanctity

⁶⁸ Cf. Matth., XIII, 52.

who will bring themselves and their brethren in the ministry to such a height of perfection in their lives that the faithful, admiring their example, will feel themselves moved spontaneously to imitate it.

PART III. PRACTICAL RULES

70. Up to the present we have set forth the chief truths and the basic principles on which the Catholic priesthood and the exercise of its ministry are founded. In daily practice, all holy priests conform diligently to these truths and principles while all those who, alas, have deserted or renounced the priesthood have violated the obligations contracted by sacred ordination.

New Methods for New Times

71. Now, however, in order that this Our paternal exhortation may be more efficacious, We deem it opportune to indicate in greater detail some of the things which refer to the practice of daily life. This is all the more necessary because in modern life there are a number of situations and problems presented in a new way demanding more diligent examination and more attention. It is Our intention, therefore, to exhort all priests, especially Bishops, to expend all their solicitude in promoting all that is necessary in our times and in bringing all those who withdraw from the right path back to truth, goodness, and virtue.

FORMATION OF THE CLERGY

Secular and Religious Priests United for the Good of the Church

72. As you well know, after the long and varied upheavals of the recent war, the number of priests both in Catholic countries and in the missions has often fallen behind the evergrowing needs. For this reason, We exhort all priests, both those of the diocesan clergy and those belonging to religious orders or congregations, to go forward, bound close together with bonds of fraternal charity, in union of strength and will, toward the common goal: the good of the Church, personal sanctification, and the sanctification of the faithful. All, even Religious who live apart

from the world and in silence, can contribute to the efficacy of the priestly apostolate with prayer, sacrifice and also with ready and generous action, in so far as they can.

Recruiting New Laborers

73. But it is also necessary to recruit new workers, with the help of divine grace. Therefore, We draw the attention especially of the Ordinaries and of those engaged in any way in the care of souls to this most important question which is intimately connected with the future of the Church. It is true that the Society founded by Christ will never lack the priests necessary for its mission. Nevertheless, it is necessary for all to be watchful and to exert themselves, mindful of the words of Our Lord, "the harvest indeed is abundant but the laborers are few",⁶⁹ and to be as diligent as possible in giving the Church numerous and holy ministers.

Prayer for Vocations

74. Our Lord Himself shows us the surest way of having numerous vocations, "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest":⁷⁰ humble prayer trusting in God.

Creating Great Esteem for the Priesthood

75. But it is also necessary that the souls of those called by God be prepared for the impulse and the invisible action of the Holy Ghost. The contribution that Christian parents, pastors, confessors, superiors of seminaries, all priests, and all the faithful who have the needs and the growth of the Church at heart can give is precious to this end. Let the ministers of God seek not only by preaching and catechetical instruction but also in private conversations to dissipate the prejudices now so widespread against the priestly state by showing its lofty dignity, its beauty, its necessity and its great merit. Every Christian mother and father, whatever their social status, must pray to God to make them worthy to have at least one of their children called to His service. Finally, all Christians must deem it their duty to encourage and aid those who feel called to the priesthood.

⁶⁹ Luc., X, 2.

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

. . . Especially by Holiness of Life

76. The choice of candidates for the priesthood recommended by Canon Law ⁷¹ to pastors of souls must be the particular task of all priests, who have not only to render humble and generous thanks to God for the inestimable gift they have received but in like manner must hold nothing dearer or more pleasing than to find and prepare a successor for themselves among those young men whom they know to be equipped with the necessary qualifications. To succeed more efficaciously in this, every priest must make an effort to be and to show himself an example of the priestly life which for the young men whom he approaches and among whom he looks for signs of the divine call can constitute an ideal for imitation.

Careful and Prudent Selection

77. This wise and prudent selection must go on always and in all places not only among the young men who are already in the seminary but also among those who are studying elsewhere, and particularly among those who partake in the various activities of the Catholic apostolate. These last, even though they enter the priesthood at a later age, are often equipped with greater and more solid virtues because they have already been tried and have strengthened their souls by contact with the difficulties of life and have already collaborated in a field which is also the realm of priestly activity.

Investigation of Aspirants

78. But it is always necessary to investigate individual aspirants to the priesthood with diligence, to ascertain the intentions and the reasons with which they have taken this resolution. Particularly, when it is a question of boys, it is necessary to find out if they are furnished with the necessary moral and physical qualifications and whether they aspire to the priesthood solely for its dignity and the spiritual profit of themselves and other people.

The Physical Qualifications of Candidates

79. You know well, venerable brethren, what are the conditions of mental and moral fitness the Church requires

⁷¹ Cf. can. 1353.

in young men who aspire to the priesthood. We deem it superfluous to detain you with this subject. On the other hand, We rather deem it useful to exhort you to examine with your acknowledged prudence and with care whether those who wish to receive Orders are physically fit, all the more so because the recent war has not infrequently left deadly traces on the rising generation and has disturbed them in many ways. For this reason, these candidates should be carefully examined and, where necessary, the judgment of a good physician should be sought.

80. With this choice of vocations made with zeal and prudence, We trust that there will arise on all sides a numerous and select force of candidates for the priesthood.

THE CARE OF VOCATIONS

A Serious Duty

81. But if many pastors are preoccupied about the decrease of vocations, they are no less disturbed when it is a question of handling the young men who have already entered the seminary. We are aware, venerable brethren, how arduous this labor is and how many great difficulties it presents. But the carrying out of so serious a duty will give you the greatest consolation insofar as, as Our predecessor Leo XIII said: "From the cares and solicitude imposed by the training of priests, you will have results most ardently to be desired and you will experience that your episcopal office will be easier in its exercise and much more fruitful in its results".⁷²

82. We deem it opportune, therefore, to give you some rules suggested by the necessity, greater today than ever, of training holy priests.

A Healthy and Calm Environment

83. In the first place, it is necessary to remember that pupils in minor seminaries are adolescents separated from the natural environment of their home. It is necessary, therefore, that the life the boys lead in the seminaries correspond as far as possible to the normal life of boys. Great

⁷² Litt. Enc. *Quod Multum*, ad Episcopos Hungariae, die 22 mensis Augusti a. 1886: *Acta Leonis*, vol. VI, p. 158.

importance will be given to spiritual life, but in a manner suited to their capacity and their degree of development. Everything must be carried out in a healthy and calm atmosphere. Nevertheless, even here it must be observed that "the just measure is moderation" in order that it may not happen that those who have to be trained to sacrifice and the evangelical virtues "live in sumptuous houses with attendance paid to their taste and comfort".⁷³

Developing a Sense of Responsibility

84. Particular attention must be paid to character formation in each boy by developing in him the sense of responsibility, the capacity to use his judgment concerning men and events, and the spirit of initiative. For this reason, directors of seminaries must use moderation in the employment of coercive means, gradually lightening the system of rigorous control and restrictions as the boys grow older, by helping the boys themselves to stand on their own feet and to feel responsibility for their own actions. Directors should give a certain liberty of action in some kinds of projects habituating their pupils to reflect so that the assimilation of theoretical and practical truths may become easier for them. Let directors have no fear in keeping them in contact with the events of the day which apart from furnishing them with the necessary material for forming and expressing a good judgment can form material for discussions to help them and accustom them to form judgments and reach balanced conclusions.

85. In this way young men are put on the path of honesty and loyalty, of esteem for firmness and uprightness of character and aversion for falsehood and every kind of duplicity. The more sincere and upright they are, the better can they be known and guided by their superiors who must judge whether they are called by God to undertake the burdens of the sacred ministry.

Not Too Much Isolation from the World

86. If young men—especially those who have entered the seminary at a tender age—are educated in an environment too isolated from the world, they may, on leaving the sem-

⁷³ Cf. Allocut. d. 25 Novembris a. 1948 habitam: A.A.S., XL, 1948, p. 552.

inary, find serious difficulty in their relations with either the ordinary people or the educated laity, and it may happen that they either adopt a misguided and false attitude toward the faithful or that they consider their training in an unfavorable light. For this reason, it is necessary that the students come in closer contact, gradually and prudently, with the judgments and tastes of the people in order that when they receive Holy Orders and begin their ministry they will not feel themselves disorientated—a thing that would not only be harmful to their souls but also injure the efficacy of their work.

Intellectual, Literary, and Scientific Training

87. Another serious duty of Superiors is the intellectual training of students. You have in mind, venerable brethren, norms and prescriptions given by this Apostolic See on this subject and We Ourselves from Our first meeting with the students of the seminaries and colleges of Rome at the beginning of Our pontificate have recommended these directives to all.⁷⁴

Not Inferior to That of The Laity

88. In the first place We urge that the literary and scientific education of future priests be at least not inferior to that of laymen who take similar courses of study. In this way, not only will the seriousness of the intellectual training be assured but the choice of subjects also will be facilitated. Seminarians will feel themselves freer in the choice of their vocation and there will be warded off the danger that, through lack of sufficient cultural preparation which can assure a position in the world, one or the other student may feel himself in some way driven to take a path that is not his by following the reasoning of the unfaithful steward: "To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed".⁷⁵ If, then, it should happen that some student about whom good hopes were formed for his entering the Church should leave the seminary, this would not be a source of preoccupation, because later on the young man who succeeds in finding his path, would not be able to forget the benefits

⁷⁴ Cf. *Orationem die 24 mensis Iunii 1939 habitam: A.A.S., XXXI, 1939, pp. 245-251.*

⁷⁵ *Luc., XVI, 3.*

received in the seminary and by his activity would be able to make a notable contribution to the work of the Catholic laity.

Philosophical and Theological Training

89. In the intellectual training of young seminarians—although other studies especially those relating to social questions, so necessary today, should not be overlooked—the greatest importance must be given to philosophical and theological teaching “according to the method of the Angelic Doctor”⁷⁶ brought up to date and adapted to meet modern errors. Study of these subjects is of maximum importance and usefulness both for the priest himself and for the people. The masters of the spiritual life state that the study of the sacred sciences, provided they be imparted in the right way and according to correct systems, is a most efficacious help in preserving and nourishing the spirit of faith, checking the passions, and maintaining the soul united to God. It must be added that the priest who is the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world”⁷⁷ must labor mightily for the defense of the Faith by preaching the Gospel and confuting the doctrinal errors opposed to it which are disseminated today among the people by every possible means. But these errors cannot be efficaciously fought if the unassailable principles of Catholic philosophy and theology are not thoroughly known.

The Scholastic Method

90. In this connection, it is not out of place to recall that the method of teaching which has long been in use in Catholic schools is of particular efficacy in giving clear concepts and showing how doctrines entrusted as sacred deposit to the Church, teacher of Christians, are organically connected and clear. Today, there are not lacking those who, departing from the teachings of the Church and overlooking clarity and precision of ideas, not only depart from the correct method of our schools but open the way to errors and confusion, as sad experience shows.

91. In order to prevent wavering and uncertainty where ecclesiastical studies are concerned, We, strongly exhort you, venerable brethren, to watch carefully that the precise

⁷⁶ Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 1366, 2.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Matth.*, V, 13, 14.

rules laid down by this Apostolic See for such studies be faithfully received and translated into action.

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL TRAINING

The Harm of Knowledge for Its Own Sake

92. If, with so much solicitude, We have, in the discharge of Our Apostolic office, recommended solid intellectual training among the clergy, it is easy to understand how much We have at heart the spiritual and moral training of young clerics without which even outstanding knowledge can bring incalculable harm on account of arrogant pride which easily enters the heart. Therefore, Mother Church primarily and anxiously wishes that in seminaries solid foundations be laid for the holiness that the minister of God must develop and practice all his life.

Clerics Must Seek the Interior Life

93. As We have already written regarding priests, we now insist that clerical students be deeply convinced of the necessity of striving to acquire those ornaments of the soul which are the virtues and, after acquiring them, to preserve them with the desire of increasing them.

94. In the course of the day, following the more or less uniform program, clerics perform the same spiritual exercises. There is ready danger that the external exercises of piety may not be accompanied by an interior movement of the soul, a thing which can become habitual and even grow worse when, outside the seminary, the minister of God is often carried away by the necessary performance of his duties.

The Spirit of Faith

95. For this reason, let every care be given to the training of future clerics for the interior life which is the life of the spirit and according to the spirit. Let them do everything in the light of divine Faith and in union with Christ, convinced that there is no other kind of life possible for him who one day must receive the priestly character and represent the Divine Master in the Church. For seminarians, the interior life is the most efficacious means of

acquiring the priestly virtues, of overcoming difficulties and carrying out salutary resolutions.

Their Directors Must Instill in Them the Ecclesiastical Virtues

96. Those who are responsible for the moral training of seminarians must always aim at making them acquire all the virtues the Church demands in priests. Of these virtues We have already spoken in another part of this Exhortation and, therefore, there is no reason to return to the subject here. But We cannot refrain from indicating and recommending among all virtues that aspirants to the priesthood must firmly possess those upon which the moral structure of the priest is built, as upon solid pillars.

Particularly Obedience

97. It is necessary that young men acquire the spirit of obedience by accustoming themselves to submit their own will sincerely to that of God manifested through the legitimate authority of the superiors. Nothing can be lamented more in the conduct of the future priest than that it is not in conformity with the Will of God. This obedience must always be inspired by the perfect model, the Divine Teacher Who on earth had but one single program "to do thy will, O God".⁷⁸

98. From the seminary on, the future priest must learn to give filial and sincere obedience to his superiors in order to be always ready later on to obey his Bishop docilely according to the teaching of the invincible Athlete of Christ, Ignatius of Antioch: "Obey ye all the bishop as Jesus Christ obeyed the Father".⁷⁹ "He who honors the bishop is honored by God". "He who does anything without the Bishop's knowledge, serves the devil".⁸⁰ "Do nothing without the bishop, keep your body like the temple of God, love union, flee discord, be an imitator of Jesus Christ as He was an imitator of His Father".⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Hebr.*, X, 7.

⁷⁹ *Ad Smyrnaeos*, VIII, 1; Migne, *P.G.*, VIII, 714.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, IX, 1, 714, 715.

⁸¹ *Ad Philadelphenses* VII, 2; Migne, *P.G.*, V, 700.

Solid and Proved Chastity

99. Every care and solicitude must be used to have the young soldiers of the sacred army appreciate, love, and preserve chastity, because the choice of the priestly state and perseverance in it depend in great part on this virtue. Being exposed to greater dangers, chastity must be solidly possessed and proved at length. Let seminarians, therefore, inform themselves about the nature of ecclesiastical celibacy, of the chastity that they must observe and of the obligations it brings with it,⁸² and let them be warned of the dangers they may meet. Let them take heed to defend themselves against these dangers from a tender age, having recourse faithfully to the means offered by Christian asceticism for bridling the passions, because the more strongly and efficaciously they control them, the further the soul will progress in the other virtues and the surer will be the fruit of their priestly ministry. Hence, whenever young seminarians show evil tendencies in this regard and, after a due trial, show themselves incorrigible, it is absolutely necessary to dismiss them from the seminary before they receive Holy Orders.

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament

100. These and all the other priestly virtues can be easily acquired and firmly possessed by seminarians if from the beginning they have acquired and cultivated a sincere and tender devotion to Christ Jesus present "truly, really, and substantially" in our midst in the most august Sacrament, and if they make of Him the inspiration and the end of all their actions and their aspirations. And, if to devotion to the Blessed Sacrament they unite filial devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, full of trust and abandonment to the Mother of God and urging the soul to imitate her virtues, then the Church will be supremely happy, because the fruit of an ardent and zealous ministry can never be wanting in a priest whose adolescence has been nourished with the love of Jesus and Mary.

Care of the Younger Clergy

101. Here We cannot refrain from strongly urging you, venerable brethren, to take particular care of the young priests.

⁸² Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 132.

102. The passage from the sheltered and tranquil life of the seminary to the active ministry may be dangerous for the priest who enters the open field of the apostolate if he has not been prudently prepared for the new life. You should realize that the many hopes placed in young priests may fail if they are not gradually introduced to the work, wisely watched, and paternally guided in the first steps of their ministry.

103. We approve, therefore, the gathering of young priests when possible for some years in special institutions where, under the guidance of experienced superiors, they can develop their piety and perfect themselves in sacred studies and be put on the path toward that form of the ministry more closely corresponding to their temperaments and aptitudes.

104. For this reason We would like to see institutions of this nature established in every diocese or, according to circumstances, for a number of dioceses together.

105. In Our own Beloved City, We Ourselves did this when, on the 50th anniversary of Our priesthood, We erected the St. Eugene Institute for young priests.⁸³

106. We exhort you, venerable brethren, to avoid so far as it is possible placing still inexperienced priests into full pastoral activity or sending them into places far removed from the See of the diocese or from other larger centers. In this situation—isolated, inexperienced, exposed to dangers, lacking prudent advisors,—they themselves and their ministry would certainly suffer harm.

107. It is particularly recommended that young priests live with some pastor and his assistants, for, in this way, with the guidance of older people, they can more easily adjust themselves to the sacred ministry and perfect the spirit of piety.

108. We remind all pastors of souls that the future of newly ordained priests is to a great extent in their hands. The burning zeal and the generous resolutions with which they are animated at the beginning of their ministry can

⁸³ Cf. A.A.S., XLI, 1949, pp. 165-167.

be spent and certainly weakened by the example of their seniors if these latter do not shine with the splendor of virtue or if, under the pretext of not changing old customs, they show themselves inclined to idleness.

Community Life

109. We approve and strongly recommend what is already the wish of the Church⁸⁴ that the custom of community life be introduced and extended among the priests of the same parish or of nearby parishes.

110. If the practice of community life brings with it some sacrifice, there is, however, no doubt that great advantages derive from it. In the first place it daily nourishes the spirit of charity and zeal among the priests. Then, it gives an admirable example to the faithful of the detachment of the ministers of God from their own interests and from their families. Finally, it is a testimony of the scrupulous care with which they safeguard priestly chastity.

Continuation of Studies

111. Moreover, priests must cultivate study as Canon Law wisely prescribes: "Clerics must not suspend their studies, especially those of a sacred nature, after having received the priesthood".⁸⁵ The Code, besides requiring that examinations be undergone "every year for at least three years"⁸⁶ where new priests are concerned, also prescribes that the clergy should hold meetings several times a year "to promote knowledge and piety".⁸⁷

Libraries for the Clergy

112. To encourage these studies, sometimes rendered difficult by the precarious economic conditions of the clergy, it would be most opportune if Ordinaries, according to the splendid tradition of the Church, were to restore dignity and efficiency to cathedral, collegiate, and parochial libraries.

113. Despite the despoiling and destruction they have undergone, many ecclesiastical libraries often possess a

⁸⁴ Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 134.

⁸⁵ *Can.* 129.

⁸⁶ *Can.* 130, 1°.

⁸⁷ *Can.* 131, 1°.

precious heritage of parchments, of books in manuscript or print, "eloquent testimony of the activity and influence of the Church, of the faith and generous piety of our ancestors, their studies and their good taste".⁸⁸

114. These libraries must not be neglected receptacles for books but living structures with a room for reference and reading. Above all, however, let them be up to date and enriched with works of every kind, especially those relating to the religious and social questions of our times, so that teachers, parish priests, and particularly young priests may find there the doctrine necessary for diffusing the truth of the Gospel and for fighting error.

PART IV. CURRENT PROBLEMS

115. Finally, venerable brethren, We deem it Our office to give you a warning about the difficulties proper to our time.

The Spirit of Novelty

116. You are already aware that among priests, especially those less equipped with doctrine and of less strict lives, a certain spirit of novelty is being diffused in an ever graver and more disturbing manner.

117. Novelty is never in itself a criterion of truth and it can be worthy of praise only when it confirms the truth and leads to righteousness and virtue.

118. The age in which we live suffers from serious errors indeed: philosophical systems which are born and die without improving morals in any way; monstrosities of art which even pretend to call themselves Christian; standards of government in many countries which are aimed at the personal interests of individuals rather than at the common prosperity of all; methods of living and economic and social relations which threaten honest men more than the cunning. From this it follows almost naturally that there are not lacking in our times priests, infected in some way

⁸⁸ Cf. Epistulam Emi Card. Petri Gasparri, a publicis Ecclesiae negotiis, ad Italiae Episcopos datam die 15 mensis Aprilis anno 1923: in *Enchiridion Clericorum*, Typ. Pol. Vat., 1937, p. 613.

by this contagion, who imbibe opinions and follow a mode of life even in dress and the care of their person alien to both their dignity and their mission; priests who allow themselves to be led astray by the mania for novelty whether it be in their preaching to the faithful or in combating the errors of adversaries; priests who compromise not only their consciences but also their good name and the efficacy of their ministry.

Changes Require the Bishop's Approval

119. We earnestly call your attention to all this, venerable brethren, confident that, between widespread passion for the new and exaggerated attachment to the past, you will use a prudence which is circumspect and vigilant even when it tries fresh paths of activity and struggle for the triumph of the truth. We are far from holding that the apostolate must not be in keeping with the reality of modern life and that projects adapted to the needs of our time should not be promoted. But since the whole apostolate carried on by the Church is by its essence under the control of the Hierarchy, new forms must not be introduced save with the Bishop's approval. Ordinaries of one and the same region or one and the same country must strive in this matter to establish an understanding among themselves in order to provide for the needs of their districts and to study the methods best suited to and in keeping with the modern apostolate.

120. In this way, all will be done in an orderly and disciplined manner and the efficacy of priestly action will be assured. Let everyone be persuaded of this: that it is necessary to follow the Will of God and not that of the world, and to regulate the activity of the apostolate according to the directives of the Hierarchy and not according to personal opinions. It is a vain illusion to think oneself able to hide one's own inner poverty and still cooperate effectively in spreading the Kingdom of Christ by novelties in his method of action.

THE CLERGY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

121. Similarly, a correct attitude is required with regard to the social doctrine of our times.

Squarely Facing Communism

122. There are some who show themselves fearful and uncertain when faced with the wickedness of communism which aims to rob of their faith the very ones to whom it promises material prosperity. But documents recently issued by this Holy See have shown clearly the way to be followed, the path from which no one must stray unless he wishes to fail in his duty.

Denouncing the Harmful Excesses of Capitalism

123. Others show themselves no less timid and uncertain in the face of that economic system which derives its name from the excessive amassing of private wealth [excessive, or exaggerated, capitalism],* the serious effects of which the Church has never ceased to denounce. The Church has not only indicated the abuses of capital and the right to property promoted and defended by this system, but has insisted just as much that capital and private property must be instruments of production for the benefit of the whole of society and the means of sustaining and defending the freedom and dignity of the human person. Errors of both economic systems and the harmful results deriving from them must persuade everyone, especially priests, to remain faithful to the social teaching of the Church, to spread the knowledge of it and, to the extent of their power, to reduce it to practical application. This teaching is the only one that can remedy the evils We have denounced, evils which are so widespread. This teaching unites and perfects the demands of justice and the duties of charity and promotes a social order which does not oppress individuals and isolate them in a blind selfishness but unites everyone in harmonious relations and the bond of fraternal solidarity.

*—Phrase in brackets inserted by translator. The preceding phrasing is a literal translation of the official Latin text. Because the Italian translation appearing in *L'Osservatore Romano* used the word "capitalism" while the Latin did not, the N.C.W.C. News Service requested a precise explanation of the meaning of the Latin phrase. Msgr. Antonio Bacci, secretary of the Vatican Secretariate for Briefs to Princes, said that what was intended by the Latin phrase was "excessive or exaggerated capitalism". Monsignor Bacci heads the Secretariate that is charged with the preparation in Latin of documents committed to it by the Pope.

Serving Both the Poor and the Well-to-do

124. Following the example of the Divine Master, the priest must help the poor, the working class, all those who are in difficulties and misery, which includes also many of the middle class and not a few brother priests. But he must not overlook those who, although well off as far as worldly goods are concerned, are often the poorest in soul and have need of being called to spiritual renovation in order to do as did Zacchaeus, who said: "I give one-half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold".⁸⁹ Where struggling society is concerned, therefore, the priest must never lose sight of the purpose of his mission. Zealously and fearlessly, he must explain the correct principles regarding property, wealth, social justice and Christian charity among the different classes, and give to all an obvious example of their application.

Educating the Laity in Social Duties

125. Ordinarily, carrying out of these Christian social principles in public life is the task of the laity, but where no capable lay Catholics are found, the priest should make every effort to train some adequately.

THE HOLY FATHER'S SOLICITUDE FOR IMPOVERISHED PRIESTS

126. This subject gives Us the opportunity of saying a word about the economic conditions in which, during the postwar period, very many priests find themselves, especially those in regions which have felt more seriously the consequences of the war and of the political situation brought about by the recent conflict. This state of affairs distresses Us profoundly and We leave nothing undone in order to relieve to the best of Our ability the hardship, misery, and extreme want experienced by many.

127. You especially, venerable brethren, are well aware how, in places where there was extreme need, We intervened through the Sacred Congregation of the Council and gave extraordinary faculties to the Bishops and established

⁸⁹ Luc., XIX, 8.

special norms to eliminate glaring economic inequalities among priests of the same diocese. We observe that, in some places, priests have answered their Pastor's call in a praiseworthy manner. In other places, it has not been possible to carry out fully the regulations laid down, because of serious difficulties encountered.

128. For this reason, We exhort you to continue in paternal fashion on the path you have taken and to notify Us of the results of your efforts, for it is inadmissible that the worker who has been sent into the vineyard of the Lord should go without his daily bread.

Social Security for Priests

129. Moreover, venerable brethren, We strongly praise all joint efforts you make so that priests not only do not lack for their daily needs but also that their future is provided for, following the social security system which is already in force in other classes of society, which We praise so much and which assures proper assistance in case of sickness, invalidism and old age. In this way you will relieve the anxieties of priests about an insecure future.

Praise for Those Who Aid Fellow Priests

130. In this connection, We express Our paternal gratitude to all those priests who, even at considerable sacrifice, have helped and still help their brethren, especially the sick and aged. By acting in this manner, they give a shining proof of that mutual charity which Jesus Christ has laid down as the distinctive mark of His disciples: "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another".⁹⁰ We trust that these ties of brotherly love will become ever closer among priests of all nations so that it may become ever more obvious that they, ministers of God the Universal Father, are united by the bond of charity, wherever they live.

131. But you well understand that such a problem cannot be adequately resolved unless the faithful feel the obligation to help the clergy according to their ability and to take every step needed to achieve this end.

⁹⁰ Ioann., XIII, 35.

Educating the Faithful to Aid Priests in Want

132. Therefore, instruct the faithful under your care on their obligation to help their priests in want. Our Lord's words always hold true: "The laborer deserves his wages".⁹¹ How can you expect fervent and energetic work from priests when they lack the necessities of life? Those faithful who overlook this duty open the way, although involuntarily, to the Church's enemies who in a number of countries seek to reduce the clergy to want in order to deprive the people of their lawful pastors.

Obligation also on the Part of Public Authorities

133. Public authorities also, according to the conditions prevailing in each country, have the duty of providing for the needs of the clergy, from whose activity society derives incalculable spiritual and moral benefits.

FINAL EXHORTATION

134. Finally, before closing Our exhortation, We cannot refrain from recapitulating and repeating how much We desire to impress Our words deeper and deeper on your minds as a program of life and work.

Bringing all Souls to Jesus

135. We are priests of Christ. Therefore we must labor with all our strength to see that the fruits of His Redemption be most efficaciously applied to every soul. Consider the immense need of our time. We must make every effort to lead back to Christian principles those brethren who have strayed through error or been blinded by passions, to enlighten nations with the light of Christian doctrine, to guide them according to Christian norms and to form in them more Christian consciences, and lastly to urge them to struggle for the triumph of truth and justice.

Transmitting to Others the Life Received from Christ

136. We shall reach our goal only when we have so sanctified ourselves that we are able to transmit to others the life and virtue we have received from Christ.

⁹¹ Luc., X, 7.

Showing Good Example

137. For this reason, We remind every priest of the words of the Apostle: "Do not neglect the grace that is in thee, granted to thee by reason of prophecy with the laying on of hands of the presbyterate".⁹² "Show thyself in all things an example of good works, in teaching, in integrity and dignity; let thy speech be sound and blameless, so that anyone opposing may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say of us".⁹³

Esteeming the Priestly Vocation

138. Take the greatest heed of your vocation, beloved sons, and live it so as to produce abundant fruit for the edification of the Church and the conversion of her enemies.

Renewal of Spirit in this Holy Year

139. In order that this Our paternal exhortation may achieve the desired result, We repeat to you these words which, in view of the Holy Year, are more opportune than ever before: "But be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth".⁹⁴ "Be you, therefore, imitators of God, as very dear children and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and delivered himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor".⁹⁵ "But be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord".⁹⁶ "Be vigilant in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints".⁹⁷

A Holy Year Retreat

140. Reflecting upon these incentives given by the Apostle of the Gentiles, We think it opportune to suggest that during the course of this Holy Year you make an extraordinary Retreat so that, full of renewed fervor and piety, you

⁹² *1 Tim.*, IV, 14.

⁹³ *Tit.*, II, 7, 8.

⁹⁴ *Ephes.*, IV, 23, 24.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 1, 2.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 18, 19.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, 18.

can incite other souls to acquire the treasures of divine indulgence.

Confidence in Mary, Mother of Priests

141. When you meet very serious difficulties in the path of holiness and the exercise of your ministry, turn your eyes and your mind trustfully to her who is the Mother of the Eternal Priest and therefore the loving Mother of all Catholic priests. You are well aware of the goodness of this Mother. In many regions you have been the humble instruments of the mercy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in wonderfully reviving the faith and charity of the Christian people.

142. Our Lady loves everyone with a most tender love, but She has a particular predilection for priests who are the living image of Jesus Christ. Take comfort in the thought of the love of the Divine Mother for each of you and you will find the labors of your sanctification and priestly ministry much easier.

All Priests Entrusted to Mary

143. To the Beloved Mother of God, mediatrix of heavenly graces, We entrust the priests of the whole world in order that, through her intercession, God will vouchsafe a generous outpouring of His Spirit which will move all ministers of the altar to holiness and, through their ministry, will spiritually renew the face of the earth.

Special Blessing for Persecuted Clergy

144. Trusting in the powerful patronage of the Immaculate Virgin Mary as far as the realization of these wishes is concerned, We implore an abundance of divine graces on all, but especially on the Bishops and priests who suffer persecution, imprisonment and exile because of their dutiful defense of the rights and the freedom of the Church. We express Our most tender affection to them and exhort them paternally to continue to give an example of priestly courage and virtue.

Blessing for all Priests

145. May the Apostolic Blessing that We lovingly impart to each and all of you, venerable brethren, and to all your

priests, be the earnest of these heavenly graces and a proof of Our paternal benevolence.

146. Given at Rome, in Saint Peter's, on the twenty-third day of September in the year of the Great Jubilee, 1950, the twelfth year of Our Pontificate.

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