

*Catholic Church, Pope (1939-1958 : Pius XII)
Fulgens radiatur
ACA 2655*



ST. BENEDICT
ENCYCLICAL LETTER
OF
POPE PIUS XII
ON
ST. BENEDICT OF NURSIA

**English Translation Provided
by the Vatican**



National Catholic Welfare Conference
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W. Washington 5, D. C.

Press of
RANDELL INC.
Washington, D. C.



ENCYCLICAL LETTER

TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHREN

THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS
AND OTHER ORDINARIES

IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE

POPE PIUS XII

VENERABLE BRETHREN

Health and Apostolic Benediction

1. Like a star in the darkness of night, Benedict of Nursia brilliantly shines, a glory not only to Italy but of the whole Church. Whoever considers his celebrated life and studies in the light of the truth of history, the gloomy and stormy times in which he lived, will without doubt realise the truth of the divine promise which Christ made to the Apostles and to the society He founded "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."¹ At no time in history does this promise lose its force; it is verified in the course of all ages flowing, as they do, under the guidance of divine Providence. But when enemies assail the Christian name more fiercely, when the fateful barque of Peter is tossed about more violently and when everything seems to be tottering with no hope of human support, it is then that Christ is present, bondsman, comforter, source of supernatural power, and raises up fresh champions to protect Catholicism, to restore it to its former vigour, and give it even greater increase under the inspiration and help of heavenly grace.

2. Among these champions shines out in resplendent light Our Benedict—blessed "by name and grace".² In the providential designs of God he emerged from a dark century when the

¹ Matth. XXVII, 20.

² S. Greg. M., Lib. Dial., II Prol.; P. L. LXVI, 126.

position and fate of civilization as well as of the Church and of civil society was in danger of collapse. The Roman Empire which had attained such a summit of glory and had joined with wise and equally tempered laws so many peoples, nations and tribes, so that it could be called more correctly the world's protector rather than its imperial master,³ this Empire like all earthly institutions had crumbled. Weakened and corrupt from within, it lay in mighty ruins in the West, shattered by the invasions of the northern tribes.

3. In such a mighty storm and universal upheaval, from where did hope shine? Where did help and protection arise in order to save humanity and what was left of its treasures from shipwreck? It came from the Catholic Church. All earthly institutions begun and built solely on human wisdom and human power, in the course of time succeed one another, flourish and then quite naturally fail, weaken and crumble away; but the organization which Our Redeemer established has received from its divine Founder unfailing life and abiding strength from on high. Thus sustained and fortified the Church comes out victorious through the hostile fortunes of time and circumstances; amid their ruins and failures it is capable of moulding a new and happier age and with Christian doctrine and spirit she can build and erect a new society of citizens, peoples and nations.

4. We are happy, Venerable Brethren, to treat briefly in this Encyclical Letter the part played by Benedict in this renewal and restoration; for this year, it would seem fourteen centuries have elapsed since he happily exchanged this earthly exile for his heavenly country after innumerable labours for God's glory and man's salvation.

I

5. "Born in the province of Nursia of honorable parentage"⁴ "he was filled with the spirit of all justice"⁵ and in a remarkable way he supported Christianity by his holiness, prudence and wisdom. While the century had grown old in vice, while Italy and all Europe seemed to be a wretched theatre for the life and death struggle of nations, and even the monastic

³ Cf. Cic., *De Off.* II, 8.

⁴ S. Greg. M., *Lib. Dial.* II, Prol., loc. cit. 126.

⁵ Mabillon, *Annales Ord. S. Bened.*; *Lucae* 1739, t. I, p. 106.

discipline was weakened with worldliness and was not up to the task of resisting and overcoming the allurements of corruption, Benedict proved the perennial youth of the Church by his outstanding sanctity and work; he restored morality by his teaching and example; he protected the sanctuary of religious life with safer and holier laws. Nor was that all; he and his followers reclaimed the uncultured tribes from their wild life to civic and Christian culture; directing them to the practice of virtue, industry and the peaceful arts and literature, he united them in the bonds of fraternal affection and charity.

6. In the first flower of youth he was sent to Rome to study the liberal sciences;⁶ there with great grief he noticed heresies and all manner of errors prevalent and many minds deceived and corrupted; private and public morality were crumbling and very many, especially the fine elegant youth, were sadly sunk in the mire of pleasure. The result was that it could be said of Roman society "it is dying and it laughs. In nearly every part of the world tears follow on our laughter"⁷. However, under God's influence, "he gave himself to no disport or pleasure . . . but when he saw many through the uneven paths of vice run headlong to their own ruin, he drew back his foot but new-set in the world . . . Contemning therefore learning and studies, and abandoning his father's house and goods, he desired only to please God in a virtuous life"⁸. He willingly bid farewell to the comforts of life and the charms of a corrupt age, as well as to the enticing and honourable offices of a promising future to which he could have aspired; leaving Rome behind, he sought out wild and solitary places where he could devote himself to the contemplation of the divine. Thus he came to Subiaco and there retiring into a narrow cave he began to live a life that was more heavenly than human.

7. Hidden with Christ in God,⁹ he there strove for three years with great fruit to acquire the perfection and holiness of the Gospels to which he seemed to be called by divine instinct. He made the practice of shunning all earthly things to seek alone and ardently heavenly things; of holding converse with God day and night; of praying incessantly for his own salvation and for

⁶ Cf. S. Greg. M., Lib. Dial. II Prol.; loc. cit. 126.

⁷ Salvian, De gub. mundi, VII P. L. LIII, 130.

⁸ S. Greg. M., Lib. Dial. II, Prol.; loc. cit. 126.

⁹ Cf. Col. III; 3.

the salvation of men; in curbing and mastering the body by voluntary punishment, and checking and controlling the evil motions of the senses. In this way of life he found such sweetness of soul that all the former delights he had experienced from his wealth and ease now appeared distasteful to him and in a way forgotten. One day the enemy of human nature aroused in him very strong allurements of the flesh; at once he strenuously resisted—noble and strong soul that he was, and casting himself into a thicket of briars and sharp nettles by voluntary wounds he conquered and quenched the interior fire. Victorious over himself he seemed to have been strengthened from on high as a reward. “After which time, as he himself related to his disciples, he was so free from the like temptation that he never felt any such motion . . . Being now altogether free from vicious temptation he worthily deserved to be a master of virtue”.¹⁰

8. Our saint, then, living for a long time this secluded and solitary life in the cave of Subiaco, shaped and set himself in sanctity, and laid those solid foundations of Christian perfection on which he was given later to raise a mighty building of lofty heights. As you well know, Venerable Brethren, zealous and apostolic works become useless and vain unless they proceed from a soul enriched with those Christian qualities which alone with God’s grace can make human undertakings contribute to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This Benedict knew well and had found to be true. Before undertaking and executing those great designs and plans to which he was called by God, he first devoted his most earnest efforts and fervent prayers to make himself fully master of that integral, evangelical holiness which he desired the others to acquire.

9. When the reputation of his sanctity spread and daily increased everywhere, not only the monks who lived close by desired to come under his rule, but a multitude of townsfolk began to flock to him in groups desiring to hear his soothing voice, to admire his extraordinary virtue and to see the wondrous signs that God often worked through him. Indeed that bright light that shone from the dark cave of Subiaco spread so far and wide that it even reached remote regions. Thus “nobles and devout persons of the city of Rome began to resort to him and

¹⁰ S. Greg. M., Lib. Dial., II, 3; loc. cit. 132.

commended their children to be brought up by him in the service of Almighty God".¹¹

10. Then it was that this holy man saw that the time, ordained by God's providence, had come for him to found a family of religious men and to mould them to the perfection of the Gospels. He began under most favorable auspices. "For in those parts he had gathered together a great many in the service of God, so that by the assistance of Our Lord Jesus Christ he built there 12 monasteries, in each of which he put 12 monks with their Superiors, and retained a few with himself whom he thought to instruct further".¹²

11. But while things started very favorably, as We said, and yielded rich and salutary results, promising still greater in the future, Our saint with the greatest grief of soul, saw a storm breaking over the growing harvest, which an envious spirit had provoked and desires of earthly gain had stirred up. Since Benedict was prompted by divine and not human counsel, and feared lest the envy which had been aroused mainly against himself should wrongfully recoil on his followers, "he let envy take its course, and after he had disposed of the oratories and other buildings—leaving in them a competent number of brethren with superiors—he took with him a few monks and went to another place".¹³ Trusting in God and relying on His ever present help, he went south and arrived at a fort "called Cassino situated on the side of a high mountain . . . ; on this stood an old temple where Apollo was worshiped by the foolish country people, according to the custom of the ancient heathens. Around it likewise grew groves, in which even till that time the mad multitude of infidels used to offer their idolatrous sacrifices. The man of God coming to that place broke the idol, overthrew the altar, burned the groves, and of the temple of Apollo made a chapel of St. Martin. Where the profane altar had stood he built a chapel of St. John; and by continual preaching he converted many of the people thereabout".¹⁴

12. Cassino, as all know, was the chief dwelling place and the main theatre of the Holy Patriarch's virtue and sanctity. From the summit of this mountain, while practically on all sides

¹¹ Ibidem II, 3; loc. cit. 140.

¹² Ibidem, loc. cit. 140.

¹³ Ibidem, II, 8; loc. cit. 148.

¹⁴ Ibidem, loc. cit. 152.

ignorance and the darkness of vice kept trying to overshadow and envelop everything, a new light shone, kindled by the teaching and civilization of old and further enriched by the precepts of Christianity; it illumined the wandering peoples and nations, recalled them to truth and directed them along the right path. Thus indeed it may be rightly asserted that the holy monastery built there was a haven and shelter of highest learning and of all the virtues, and in those very troubled times was, "as it were, a pillar of the Church and a bulwark of the faith".¹⁵

13. It was here that Benedict brought the monastic life to that degree of perfection to which he had long aspired by prayer, meditation and practice. The special and chief task that seemed to have been given to him in the designs of God's providence was not so much to impose on the West the manner of life of the monks of the East, as to adapt that life and accommodate it to the genius, needs and conditions of Italy and the rest of Europe. Thus to the placid asceticism which flowered so well in the monasteries of the East, he added laborious and tireless activity which allows the monks "to give to others the fruit of contemplation",¹⁶ and not only to produce crops from uncultivated land, but also to cultivate spiritual fruit through their exhausting apostolate. The community life of a Benedictine house tempered and softened the severities of the solitary life, not suitable for all and even dangerous at times for some; through prayer, work, and application to sacred and profane sciences, a blessed peace knows not idleness nor sloth; activity and work, far from wearying the mind, distracting it and applying it to useless things, rather tranquillize it, strengthen it and lift it up to higher things. Indeed, an excessive rigor of discipline or severity of penance is not imposed, but before all else love of God and a fraternal charity that is universal and sincere. "He so tempered the rule that the strong would desire to do more and the weak not be frightened by its severity; he tried to govern his disciples by love rather than dominate them by fear".¹⁷ When one day he saw an anchorite, who had bound himself with chains and confined himself in a narrow cave, so that he could not return to his sins and to his worldly life, with gentle words Benedict

¹⁵ Pius X., Litt. Apost. Archicoenobium Casinense, d.d.x. Febr., a. MDCCCXIII.

¹⁶ S. Thom., II-IIae. q. 188, a. 6.

¹⁷ Mabillon, *Annales Ord. S. Bened.*, Lucae 1739, t. I, p. 107.

admonished him: "If you are a servant of God, let not the chains of iron bind you but the chains of Christ".¹⁸

14. Thus the special norms of eremitic life and their particular precepts, which were generally not very certain or fixed and often depended on the wish of the superior, gave way to Benedictine monastic law, outstanding monument of Roman and Christian prudence. In it the rights, duties and works of the monks are tempered by the benevolence and charity of the Gospel. It has proved and still proves a powerful means to encourage many to virtue and lead them to sanctity. For in the Benedictine law the highest prudence and simplicity are united; Christian humility is joined to virile virtue; mildness tempers severity; and a healthy freedom ennobles due submission. In it correction is given with firmness, but clemency and benignity hold sway; the ordinances are observed but obedience brings rest to mind and peace to soul; gravity is honored by silence but easy grace adds ornament to conversation; the power of authority is wielded but weakness is not without its support.¹⁹

15. It is no wonder then that "the rule which Benedict, the man of God, wrote for the monks was outstanding for wisdom and elegant in language";²⁰ and today receives the highest praise from all. It is a pleasure to dwell here briefly on some of its main lines and place them in their true light; since We hope that this will be gratifying and useful not only to the numerous followers of the Holy Patriarch but also to the Christian clergy and faithful.

16. The monastic community is so constituted and arranged that it resembles the Christian home over which the Abbot or Superior presides like the father of a family; and all should depend completely on his paternal authority. "We see that it is expedient" says St. Benedict, "for the preservation of peace and charity, that the entire government of the Monastery depend on the will of the Abbot"²¹. Therefore each and everyone as a matter of duty should obey him most religiously²² and in him see God Himself and reverence His authority. As a duty committed

¹⁸ S. Greg. M., Lib. Dial., III, 16; P. L. LXXXVII, 261.

¹⁹ Cf. Bossuet Panegyrique de S. Benoit, Oeuvres compl. Vol. XII, Paris 1863, p. 105.

²⁰ S. Greg. M., Lib. Dial. II, P. L. LXVI, 200.

²¹ Reg. S. Benedicti, c. 65.

²² Cf. Ibidem, c. 3.

to him, he undertakes to govern the souls of the monks and to lead them to evangelical perfection; and so let him most diligently weigh and ponder within himself that some day he must answer for them to the Supreme Judge,²³ and let him so act in this grave matter that he may be justly rewarded when he renders his account before the "dreadful judgment of God".²⁴ Besides, whenever important matters are to be discussed in any monastery, let him call all the monks and listen carefully to their freely given counsels before he gives the decision that appears to him best.²⁵

17. From the beginning the question of accepting or refusing candidates for the monastic life was intricate and difficult. To the holy monasteries flocked aspirants from every race and people and from all classes of citizens: Romans and non-Romans, freemen and slaves, conquered and the conquerors, from the patrician nobility not a few, and also from the lowly plebians. Such a situation Benedict mastered with breadth of vision and fraternal charity, "because" as he says "whether bondman or freeman, we are all one in Christ, and bear an equal burden of servitude under one Lord . . . Therefore let there be a love for all; let all be subject to the same discipline according to their desert".²⁶ For those who have embraced his Institute he ordains "that all things are common to all"²⁷ not under force or violence but spontaneously and unselfishly. Besides all within the precincts of the monastery are bound by the stability of religious life in such a way that they ought to devote themselves not only to prayer on heavenly things and reading,²⁸ but also to labor in the fields,²⁹ to the arts and crafts³⁰ as well as to the sacred works of the apostolate. As "idleness is an enemy of the soul, therefore the brethren ought to be employed at fixed times in toiling with their hands".³¹ But it is of first importance for all, and must be aimed at with the utmost diligence and the greatest care, that "nothing be preferred to the work of God".³² Although "we

²³ Cf. *Ibidem*, c. 2.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, c. 2.

²⁵ Cf. *Ibidem*, c. 3.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, c. 2.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, c. 33.

²⁸ Cf. *Ibidem*, c. 48.

²⁹ Cf. *Ibidem*, c. 48.

³⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, c. 57.

³¹ *Ibidem*, c. 48.

³² *Ibidem*, c. 43.

believe that the divine presence is everywhere . . . we believe this especially and without any doubt, when we assist at the work of God . . . Therefore let us consider in what manner it behooveth us to be in the sight of God and of His angels, and so let us chant in choir that mind and voice may accord together".³³

18. From these norms and axioms which it has pleased Us to cull from the Benedictine law, there can be easily discerned and appreciated the prudence of the monastic rule, its opportuneness, its wonderful harmony and suitability to human nature, as also its significance and supreme importance. During a dark and turbulent age, when agriculture, honorable crafts, the study of the fine arts profane and divine were little esteemed and shamefully neglected by nearly all, there arose in Benedictine monasteries an almost countless multitude of farmers, craftsmen and learned people who did their utmost to conserve the memorials of ancient learning and brought back nations both old and new—often at war with each other—to peace, harmony and earnest work. From renascent barbarism, from destruction and ruin they happily led them back to benign influence human and Christian, to patient labor, to the light of truth, to a civilization renewed in wisdom and charity.

19. Nor was that all. It is essential in the Benedictine way of life that while engaged in manual or intellectual pursuits, all should strive continually to lift their hearts to Christ having that as their chief concern, and to burn with perfect love of Him. For the things of the earth or of the whole world cannot satisfy the mind of man which God created for Himself; rather their function given them by their Creator is to move and lift us by gradual steps to the possession of God. Therefore, it is most necessary "to prefer nothing to the love of Christ";³⁴ "to count nothing more dear to them than Christ";³⁵ "let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ and may He bring us to life everlasting".³⁶

20. To this most ardent love of the Divine Redeemer there should correspond love of the neighbor. We ought to cherish all as our brethren and help them in every way. Hence while people plan and foment hate and treachery against each other,

³³ *Ib.*, c. 19.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, c. 4.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, c. 5.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, c. 72.

while robbery, slaughter and innumerable hardships and miseries are increasing in this violent unheaval of nations and institutions, Benedict proclaims these most holy precepts to his followers: "Let special care be taken in receiving the poor and travellers, because in them Christ is more surely received".³⁷ "Let all guests who come to the monastery be entertained like Christ Himself, because He will say 'I was a stranger and you took me in'."³⁸ "Before all things and above all things, special care must be taken of the sick, so that they be served in very deed as Christ Himself for He saith 'I was sick and you visited Me'."³⁹ Thus animated and burning with a perfect love of God and the neighbor he fulfilled and perfected his task; and when rejoicing and full of merits he felt in advance the breath of heaven, promise of eternal bliss; and foretasted its sweetness, "six days before his death he caused his grave to be opened. Soon seized by a fever, he began to be consumed by burning fire; day by day his strength began to wax faint, and the infirmity daily increasing the sixth day, he caused his disciples to carry him into the Oratory, where he armed himself for his going forth by receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord: then supporting his weak limbs by the hands of his disciples he stood up, his hands lifted toward heaven, and with words of prayer at last breathed forth his soul."⁴⁰

II

21. After his pious death, when the holy Patriarch went to heaven, the Order of monks he founded was far from failing or collapsing; rather, it seemed not only to be over nourished and strengthened by his living example, but also to be supported and vivified by his heavenly patronage, so that it went on increasing year by year.

22. All who are not blinded by prejudice but examine events in the light of history and judge fairly, must recognize what a beneficial influence the power and strength of the Benedictine Order had in that early period, and how many great benefits it conferred on succeeding generations. For besides the fact, as We said already, that the sons of Benedict were almost alone in

³⁷ *Ib.*, c. 53.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, c. 53.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, c. 36.

⁴⁰ *S. Greg. M., Lib. Dial., II. 37; P. L., LXXVII, 202.*

that dark age of profound ignorance and turmoil, in preserving the codices of literature and learning, in translating them most faithfully and commenting on them, they were also among the pioneers in practising and promoting the arts, science and teaching. The Catholic Church in the first three centuries of her life was in a wonderful way confirmed and increased by the sacred blood of martyrs; then in subsequent ages the integrity of her doctrines was kept intact against heretics and error by the wise and active work of the Fathers. In like manner it can be asserted that the Benedictine Institute and its flourishing monasteries were raised up not without divine guidance and assistance, in order that, while the Roman Empire was tottering, and barbarous tribes goaded by warlike fury were attacking on all sides, Christian civilization might make good its losses and after civilizing nations by the truth and charity of the Gospels would lead them skillfully and tirelessly to fraternal harmony, fruitful labor and to a virtuous life ruled by the precepts of Our Redeemer and guided by His grace. Just as in past ages the Roman legions, which tried to subdue all nations to the imperial mother city, marched along the roads built by the consuls, so now countless bands of monks whose arms "are not carnal but mighty to God"⁴¹ are sent by the Supreme Pontiff to extend to the ends of the earth the peaceful kingdom of Jesus Christ, not with sword or violence or slaughter but with the cross and the plough, with truth and charity. Wherever these unarmed bands composed of heralds of the Christian religion, of workmen, of farmers and teachers of sciences human and divine passed by, there forests and untilled lands yielded to the plough; centres of craftsmen and fine arts sprung up; from an uncouth and wild life men conformed to civil society and culture. For them the teaching and the power of the Gospel was the light that ever led them on. Numerous Apostles, burning with divine charity, traversed unknown and restless regions of Europe which they generously watered with sweat and blood; appeasing the populations they lighted for them the torch of Catholic truth and holiness. It may then be asserted that although Rome by many victories extended the might of her empire on land and sea, still "her warlike conquest subjugated fewer than the Christian peace

⁴¹ II Co., X, 4.

conquered".⁴² For besides Britain, Gaul, Batavia, Frisia, Denmark, Germany, and Scandanavia, not a few Slav nations also rejoice in these monks as their Apostles and consider them as their glory and the illustrious authors of their civilization. How many Prelates came from their Order, who wisely governed dioceses previously created, founded new ones and by their labors contributed to their progress. How many illustrious teachers and professors established famous seats of learning and of fine arts, illumined the minds of many sunk in error and increased the store of profane and religious learning in every department. Finally how many saintly men shone forth as members of the Benedictine Order, who spared no effort in attaining Evangelical perfection and by the example of their virtue, by preaching, by really wondrous signs wrought under God, devoted all their energies to the spreading of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Very many of them as you well know, Venerable Brethren, were adorned with the Episcopal dignity or the majesty of the Supreme Pontificate. The names of these Apostles, Prelates, saintly men and Supreme Pontiffs are inscribed with letters of gold in the annals of the Church; it would be tedious to name each one here; besides they glitter in such a resplendent light and hold so prominent a place in history that they are easily known to everyone.

23. We therefore think it most opportune that what We touched on briefly be pondered over seriously during these centenary celebrations and be put again in the clearest light before the eyes of all, so that all may more readily extol and praise these outstanding events of the Church and may more eagerly and willingly follow the teaching and counsels of a holier life contained in them.

24. It is not only the by gone ages that had reason to profit from the benefits of this Patriarch; our own age has many important lessons to learn from him. Let those first of all who belong to his numerous family learn—We do not doubt that they do—to follow daily ever more closely in his illustrious footsteps and let each reduce to the practice of ordinary life the principles and example of his virtue and sanctity. Thus they who in obedience to a supernatural call followed a heavenly sent vocation to embrace the monastic life, not only will correspond with it whole-

⁴² Cf. S. Leo M., Serm. I in natali. Ap. Petri et Pauli; P. L., LIV. 423.

heartedly and efficiently, seeking the peace and the calm not of their own conscience and their own eternal salvation alone, but they will also be able to labor with better effect for the common good of Christianity and for the promotion of God's glory.

25. Furthermore, all the classes of society, if they studiously and seriously examine the life, teaching and glorious achievements of St. Benedict, cannot but fall under the influence of his gentle but powerful inspiration; indeed they will spontaneously recognize that even our age troubled and anxious for the vast material and moral ruins, perils and losses that have been heaped up, can borrow from him the needed remedies. But before all, let them remember and consider that the sacred principles of religion and its norms of conduct are the safest and soundest foundations of human society; if they are disregarded and compromised, everything that promotes order, peace and prosperity among men and nations, as an almost necessary consequence, gradually collapses. The history of the Benedictine Order bears clear testimony to this, as we have seen; and it was already clearly grasped by that cultured mind of ancient pagan times when he expressed the judgment: "You, Pontiffs, give greater security to the city by religion than by the encircling walls".⁴³ Also, "when holiness and religion are removed, there follows a life of turmoil and great confusion; and I would venture to say that when devotion to the gods fails, then fail trustworthiness, human society, and justice—that most excellent of all virtues".⁴⁴

26. It is of first and primary importance that the supreme Deity be revered and His holy laws obeyed in private and in public life; otherwise, there is no human power capable of checking and keeping under due control the unleashed passions of peoples. Religion alone provides the support for what is right and honorable.

27. There is another lesson and admonition given us by the holy Patriarch of which our age stands so much in need—namely, that God is not only to be honored and adored but must be loved as a Father with great charity. Charity has indeed grown cold and lies dormant so that very many seek things of the earth rather than things of heaven; whence conflicting strifes give rise

⁴³ Cic. DE nat. Deor., II, c. 40.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, I, c. 2.

to frequent quarrels and foment distrust and bitter enmities. Since the eternal Deity is the author of our life and from Him we have received numerous gifts it is our strict duty to love Him ardently and to direct and give ourselves and all we have to Him. From this divine love fraternal charity towards our neighbor should arise, which will lead us to consider all as brothers in Christ of whatever stock or nation or culture. Thus from all nations and from all the classes of a country there will arise a single Christian family whose members will not be divided by exaggerated personal interests but will cooperate with each other harmoniously and in friendly wise.

28. If these norms, in virtue of which Benedict once illumined saved and built up the society of those turbulent times which was crumbling and even lead it back to better ways, be accepted and honored universally today, then no doubt our age will be able to come safe from its terrifying shipwreck, make up its losses material and spiritual and adequately remedy its deep wounds.

29. Besides, Venerable Brethren, the author and lawgiver of the Benedictine Order has another lesson for us, which is, indeed, freely and widely proclaimed today but far too often not properly reduced to practice as it should be. It is that human labor is not without dignity; is not a distasteful and burdensome thing, but rather something to be esteemed, an honor and a joy. A busy life, whether employed in the fields, in the profitable trades or in the liberal arts does not demean the mind but elevates it; does not reduce it to slavery but more truly gives it a certain mastery and power of direction over even the most difficult circumstances. Even Jesus, as a youth, still sheltered within the domestic walls, did not disdain to ply the carpenter's trade in his foster-father's workshop; He wished to consecrate human toil with divine sweat. Let those therefore who labor in trades as well as those who are busy in the pursuit of literature and learning remember that they are performing a most noble task in winning their daily bread; they are not only providing for themselves and their best interests but can be of service to the entire community. Let them toil, as the Patriarch Benedict admonishes, with mind and soul elevated towards heaven, working not by force but through love; and a last word, even when they are defending their own legitimate rights, let them not be envious of the lot of others, labor not in disorder and tumult, but

in tranquil and harmonious unity. Let them be mindful of those divine words "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread";⁴⁵ this law of obedience and expiation holds good for all men.

30. Above all let this not be forgotten that looking beyond the fleeting things of earth we must daily and increasingly strive after heavenly and lasting goods, whether we be engaged in intellectual work or study or in a laborious trade; when we shall have gained that goal, then and then only will it be given to us to enjoy true peace, undisturbed repose, and everlasting happiness.

31. When the recent war was raging and spread in a lamentable way to the shores of Campania and Latium, it reached, as you know, Venerable Brethren, the holy summit of Monte Cassino and although We left nothing undone in persuading, exhorting, protesting lest an immense loss be inflicted on religion, on culture and civilization, nevertheless ruin and destruction came to that illustrious home of learning and piety which had survived the turmoil of centuries like a torch conquering darkness. Then when cities, towns, villages and hamlets around were overwhelmed in ruin, it seemed that even the Arch-Abbey of Cassino, the head house of the Benedictine Order, was sharing the grief and partaking the sufferings of its sons. Practically nothing else survived from the destruction except the sacred crypt in which the relics of the holy Patriarch are preciousely kept.

32. At the present time crumbling walls and rubble, which brambles pitifully overrun, stand where lofty monuments once met one's gaze; close by a small home for the monks has been erected recently. But why may the hope not be expressed while the 14th century is being celebrated from the time that that saintly man gained heaven, after starting and perfecting his great work, why may it not be hoped that with the help of all and especially the rich and generous, this very ancient Arch-Abbey be restored as soon as possible to its pristine glory? This indeed humanity owes to Benedict; for if today it glories in great learning, if it rejoices in ancient literary documents, it must mainly thank him and his hard working sons. We confidently trust, therefore, that the future will happily realize Our hope and Our wishes. May this work be not only a task of restoration and reparation but also an omen of better times in which the

⁴⁵ Gen., III, 19.

spirit of the Benedictine Institute and its ever opportune teaching may flourish more and more.

33. Relying on this hope, to each of you Venerable Brethren, to the entire flock entrusted to your care, and to the whole family of monks which glories in this law-giver as master and parent, We impart, with great affection as a token of heavenly grace and a testimony of Our good-will, the Apostolic Benediction.

34. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the feast of St. Benedict, the twenty-first day of March, in the year 1947, the ninth of Our Pontificate.

PIUS PP. XII

