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[TRANSLATION.]

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF OUR MOST HOLY LORD,
LEO XIII., BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE.

*To all the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic
World holding Grace and Communion with the Apostolic See.*

Venerable Brethren: Health and Apostolic Benediction.

THE hidden counsel of divine wisdom, which Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, was to accomplish on earth, had for its purpose that He, through Himself and in Himself, should divinely restore the world which, so to speak, had grown old with age and decay. This much is expressed in that grand saying of St. Paul to the Ephesians, "The mystery of his will . . . to re-establish all things in Christ that are in heaven and on earth." And truly when Christ Our Lord set about fulfilling the commandment given Him by His Father, He forthwith imparted to all things a new form and beauty, banishing every trace of age and decay. For the wounds which the sin of our first parent had inflicted on human nature He himself healed; He brought back all men, by nature children of wrath, into favor with God; He led into the light of truth those who were wearied with long wanderings; He renewed to every virtue those who were worn out by every kind of impurity; and, restoring them to the inheritance of everlasting blessedness, he gave them a certain hope that their very body, mortal and frail as it was, should one day be partaker of immortality and heavenly glory. And that such wonderful blessings might endure on earth as long as men existed, He constituted the Church to carry on His work, and, looking forward to the future, commanded it to set in order whatever in human society might have become confused, and to restore whatever might have fallen into ruin.

But although this divine restoration, of which we have spoken, mainly and directly concerns men who are in the supernatural order of grace, nevertheless its precious and saving fruits have largely flowed into the natural order also; the result of which, not only to individuals, but to human society in general, has been no scanty measure of perfection in all respects. For the Christian order being once established, it became the happy lot of every man to learn and accustom himself to rest in the fatherly providence of God, and to cherish that hope of heavenly help which does not bring to confusion, from which follow fortitude, moderation, constancy, the equability of a mind at peace, and many great virtues

and noble deeds. And to domestic and civil society also there has come a wonderful accession of dignity, stability, and honor. The authority of rulers has been made more just and more holy; the obedience of peoples readier and more easy; the tie between citizens closer; the rights of property more secure. The Christian religion has attended to and provided for everything of acknowledged utility in a state, so that, according to St. Augustine, it could not have contributed more to the welfare and happiness of existence if the good and advantage of our mortal life had been the sole end for which it came into being. We do not intend to enumerate all the instances of this; but we desire to speak of domestic life, of which the source and the foundation are in *matrimony*.

The origin of marriage, Venerable Brethren, is well known among all. For, although the revilers of the Christian faith are loath to acknowledge the constant teaching of the Church on this subject, and have been long endeavoring to obliterate the record of all nations and all ages, they have been unable to extinguish or weaken the strength and light of truth. We are speaking of what is known to all and doubtful to none. When on the sixth day of creation God formed man out of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, it was His will to give him a companion, whom He brought forth wonderfully from the side of the man himself as he slept. And in this the design of God's providence was that this married pair should be the natural source of all mankind, and that from them the human race should be propagated, and, by uninterrupted course of procreation, be preserved to all time. And the union of the man and the woman, in order more perfectly to correspond to the wise counsels of God, bore upon its face two especial properties, noble above all, and, as it were, deeply impressed and engraved, namely, *unity* and *perpetuity*. And we see this announced and openly confirmed in the Gospel by the divine authority of Jesus Christ, who declared to the Jews and to the Apostles that marriage from its very institution was to be between two only, the husband and the wife, that of two there was to be as it were one flesh; and that the nuptial bond was by the will of God so closely and strongly woven that it cannot be unloosed or broken by any among men. A man "shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no one man put asunder." (Matt. xix. 5, 6.)

But this form of marriage, so excellent and admirable, began by degrees to be corrupted and to die out among the heathen nations; and it seemed to be overclouded and darkened even in the Hebrew race. For among the latter common usage had sanctioned the possession by each man of more than one wife, and afterwards, when the indulgence of Moses had conceded "to the hardness of their hearts" (Matt. xix. 8) the power of repudiation, a door was opened to divorce. As to pagan society it is scarcely credible how marriage became corrupted and disfigured, exposed as it was to the flood of each people's errors and most shameful desires.

Every nation, more or less, seems to have lost the idea and forgotten the true origin of marriage, and consequently laws were in many places enacted which seemed useful to the state rather than conformable to the requirements of nature. Solemn ceremonies, invented at the will of legislators, were the cause of the honorable name of wife, or the disgraceful name of concubine, being given to women; and the authority of the rulers of the state even took upon itself to decide who were and who were not to be allowed to marry, the laws being, to a great extent, contrary to equity, and resulting often in the commission of injustice. Moreover polygamy, polyandry, and divorce were the cause of a great relaxation of the nuptial tie. There was also a great disturbance of the mutual rights and duties of married persons when the husband acquired dominion over the wife, and commanded her, often without just cause, to go her way, while he assumed to himself, in his propensity to unbridled and untamed lust, the license to "roam with impunity amongst women of servile condition or infamous life, as if the guilt of sin depended on rank and not on the will." (Hieronymi Ep. ad Oceanum. Oper., tom. i., col. 459.) With this prevailing licentiousness on the part of husbands, nothing could be more wretched than the wife, who was reduced to such an abject condition that she was considered a mere instrument provided for the purpose of satisfying the passions or producing offspring. Nor was it thought shameful to buy and sell marriageable girls like chattels (Arnob. *adv. gent.* 4); the power of inflicting capital punishment on the wife being sometimes given to the parent and the husband. The families which owed their existence to such marriages as these were necessarily either the property of the state or owned as slaves by the father of the family, to whom the laws gave the right, not only to conclude and dissolve their marriages at his will, but even to exercise over them the monstrous power of life and death.

But at length a relief and remedy were divinely provided for all the ignominious evils with which marriages had been defiled; for Jesus Christ, the restorer of human dignity, and the perfecter of the Mosaic laws, did not make the subject of matrimony His least or last care. He ennobled the nuptials of Cana of Galilee by His presence, and made them memorable by the performance of the first of His miracles; so that from that day dates the beginning of the new holiness which descended upon human marriage. Then He recalled matrimony to the nobility of its primeval origin, both by reproofing the abuses introduced by the Jews as to both the plurality of wives and the privilege of repudiation, and by teaching them above all that no one might put asunder that which God had bound together by the chain of perpetual union. Therefore, after solving the difficulties adduced from the Mosaic institutes, assuming the part of a supreme lawgiver, He pronounced this decision in reference to married persons: "And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery." (Matt. xix. 9.)

But the Apostles, heralds of God's legislation, have more fully and in greater detail delivered to memory and to writing those things which have been decreed and established by divine authority in regard to marriage. For to no other teaching than of the Apostles must be referred what "our Holy Fathers, the Councils, and the tradition of the Universal Church have always taught" (Trid. sess. xxiv., in pr.), namely, that Christ Our Lord raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament; that He at the same time ordained that married people, guarded and protected by the celestial grace provided by His merits, should derive holiness from marriage itself; and in it, in a manner wonderfully resembling the mystical union between Him and His Church, He perfected the love which accords with nature (Trid. sess. xxiv., cap. 1, *de reform. matr.*) and cemented the natural union of the man and woman more firmly in the bonds of divine charity. "Husbands," Paul says to the Ephesians, "love your wives as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it. . . . So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, . . . for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it as also Christ does the Church; because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother; and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church." (Ad Ephes. v. 25 *et seq.*) And in the same manner we learn from the teaching of the Apostles that Christ commanded that the union and perpetual constancy which was required from the first commencement of marriages should be held sacred and should not at any time be violated. The same Paul says: "But to them that are married, not I, but the Lord commandeth that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart, that she remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband." (1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.) And again: "A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth, but if her husband die she is at liberty." (Ibid. v. 39.) For these causes, therefore, matrimony has been made "a great sacrament" (Ad Eph. v. 32), "honorable in all" (Ad Hebr. xiii. 4), pious, chaste, and venerable as representing and signifying the most exalted mysteries. Nor is its Christian perfection and completeness confined to those things which have been mentioned. For in the first place something more exalted and noble has been given to the conjugal union than it had before, inasmuch as it was bid to look not merely to the propagation of the human race but to the procreation of offspring to the Church, "fellow-citizens with the saints and the domestics of God" (Ad Eph. ii. 19), "that a people may be begotten and trained to religion and to the worship of the true God and of Our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Catech. Rom. cap. viii.). In the second place the duties of both parties in marriage are defined and their rights fully laid down. It is incumbent upon them to bear in mind and understand that each owes to the other the greatest love, a constant

fidelity, and careful and assiduous support. The man is the chief of the family, and the head of the woman, who nevertheless, inasmuch as she is flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, should be subject to and obey the man, not as a servant, but as a companion; and so neither honor nor dignity is lost by the rendering of obedience. But let divine charity ever regulate duty both in him who commands and in her who obeys, since both are images, the one of Christ, the other of His Church and both of God. For "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church. . . . But as the Church is subject to Christ so also let wives be to their husbands in all things." (Ad Eph. v. 23, 24). As regards children, they are bound to obey and be subject to their parents, and to do them honor for conscience sake; and, on the other hand, every care and forethought should be vigilantly exercised by parents to protect their children and above all to train them to virtue: "Fathers, bring them" (your children) "up in the discipline and the correction of the Lord." (Ad Eph. vi. 4). Whence it may be understood that the duties of married people are neither few nor light; yet to those who are virtuous they become, by the grace imparted through the Sacrament, not only easy to bear, but even a source of happiness.

Therefore Christ, having renewed matrimony to such and so great an excellence, intrusted and commended its entire discipline to the Church. And she has exercised authority over the marriages of Christians at every time and in every place, and has so exercised it as to show that it was her own inherent right, not obtained by the concession of men, but divinely bestowed by the will of her Author. How many and how vigilant were the pains which she took to retain the sanctity of marriages, in order that their inviolability might be preserved to them, is so well known that it need not be pointed out. And we know that loose and free love was forbidden by the sentence of the Council of Jerusalem (Act xv. 29), that the Corinthian citizen was condemned for incest by the authority of St. Paul (1 Cor. v. 5), and that the attempts of very many persons who attacked Christian marriage, to wit, Gnostics, Manichæans, Montanists, in the very beginning of Christianity, and within our memory Mormons, St. Simonians, Phalansterians, and Communists, have been opposed and rejected with the same vigor. In like manner the rights of marriage have been made equal among all persons and the same for all, the ancient distinction between slaves and the freeborn being put an end to (cap. *de conjug. serv.*), the rights of husband and wife have been equalized; for, as Jerome said (Oper., tom. i., col. 455), "among us what is not lawful for women is equally unlawful for men, and the same obligation results from equal servitude," and those same rights, tending to promote mutual goodwill and reciprocal kindness, have been firmly established; the dignity of woman has been asserted and vindicated; it has been forbidden to a husband to inflict capital punishment on an adulteress (Can. *Interfectores*, et Can. *Admonere*, quæst. 2), or with a wanton unchastity to violate his

own plighted faith. And it is also very important that the Church, as far as is right, has limited the power of fathers of families, so that their sons and daughters when desirous of marriage should not have their just liberty diminished (cap. 30, quæst. 3; cap. 3, *de cognat spirit.*); that she has decreed that there could be no marriages between relations and kindred within certain degrees (cap. 8, *de consang. et affin.*; cap. 1, *de cognat. legati.*), so that the supernatural love of married persons might diffuse itself over a wider field; that she has taken care that marriages should, as far as possible, be guarded against error, force and fraud (cap. 26, *de sponsal.*; capp. 13, 15, 29, *de sponsal. et matrim.*; et alibi). That she has willed the holiness of the marriage-bed, the security of persons (cap. 1. *de convers. infid.*; capp. 5, 6, *de eo qui duxit in matr.*), the decorum of marriages (capp. 3, 5, 8, *de sponsal. et matr.* Trid. sess. xxiv. cap. 3, *de reform. matr.*), the inviolability of religion (cap. 7, *de divort.*), to be placed under proper safeguard. In fine, she has fortified that divine institution so strongly and with such prudent laws, that no one can be a just judge of things who does not understand that even with regard to the subject of marriages the Church is the best guardian and protector of the human race; and that her wisdom has victoriously survived both the flight of time, the injuries of men, and the innumerable vicissitudes of states.

But, by the efforts of the enemy of the human race, there are not wanting those who, as they ungratefully repudiate the other benefits of redemption, in the same way either despise or altogether ignore the restitution and perfection of marriage. It is the disgrace of certain of the ancients that they were hostile to marriage in some respects; but much more perniciously do those in our own time err who would entirely pervert its nature now that it has been made perfect and complete in all its elements and parts. Of which the cause is chiefly to be found in this, that the minds of many, being imbued with the opinions of a false philosophy and a corrupt habit of mind, bear nothing so ill as to submit and obey; and they labor with the greatest bitterness in order that not only individuals, but families, and indeed the whole human race, may proudly despise the authority of God. But since the fount and origin of the family, and all human society, consists in marriage, they will in no way allow it to be under the jurisdiction of the Church; nay, they endeavor to cast it down from all sanctity, and to drive it into the narrow circle of those things which have been instituted by human authors, and are regulated and administered by the civil law of nations. Whence it necessarily followed that they have attributed to the rulers of the state all jurisdiction over marriage, and granted none to the Church; and if she at any time exercised power of that kind they affirm that this was done by the indulgence of rulers, or unjustly. But now they say it is time that those who rule the state should bravely vindicate their rights, and should determine to direct according to their own will all matters relating to marriage. Hence have arisen what are called *civil marriages*; hence

laws enacted concerning the causes which constitute an impediment to marriage; hence judicial sentences on conjugal contracts, as to whether they have been entered upon rightly or wrongly. Lastly we see every possible power of legislating and judging on this subject taken away from the Church with so much determination that no account is any longer taken either of her divine power or of the provident laws under which all the nations, to whom Christian wisdom brought the light of civilization, lived so many years.

But the naturalists and all those who, specially professing to worship the deity of the state, are striving to disturb entire commonwealths with these doctrines, cannot avoid the reproach of falsehood. For since marriage has God for its author, and since it has been even from the beginning a shadowing forth of the incarnation of the Word of God, therefore there is in it something sacred and religious, not adventitious but innate, not received from men but implanted by nature. Wherefore Innocent III (cap. 8, *de divort.*) and Honorius III. (cap. 11, *de transact.*), our predecessors, were enabled to say, not unjustly nor rashly, that the sacrament of marriage exists both among the faithful and among infidels. We call to witness also the monuments of antiquity, and the customs and institutions of those nations which were the most cultivated and excelled in a more refined knowledge of right and equity, in all of whose minds it was a settled and foregone conclusion that the idea of marriage was connected with religion and sanctity. For this reason marriages amongst them were frequently accustomed to be performed with religious ceremonies, with the authority of the pontiffs, with the ministry of priests, so great an influence even on minds ignorant of Divine Revelation had the nature of things, the memory of their origin, the conscience of the human race!

Wherefore marriage, being by its own nature and meaning sacred, it is consistent that it should be regulated and governed, not by the command of rulers, but by the divine authority of the Church, which alone possesses authority in sacred things. Then we must consider the dignity of the sacrament, by the addition of which the marriages of Christians have become in the highest degree ennobled. And, by the will of Christ, the Church alone can and ought to legislate and decide concerning sacraments, so that it is out of the question to attempt to transfer any, even the smallest part, of her power to the governors of the state. Finally, there is great weight, great force in history, by which we are clearly taught that the legislative and judicial power of which we speak was wont to be freely and continually exercised by the Church, even in those times when it is vainly and foolishly pretended that the chiefs of the state were consenting and conniving thereto. For how incredible and absurd it is to suppose that Christ Our Lord condemned the deep-rooted custom of polygamy and of repudiation by a power delegated to Him by the governor of the province or by the ruler of the Jews; or, in like manner, that the Apostle Paul declared divorces and incestuous marriages to be unlawful

with the consent or by the tacit authority of Tiberius, of Caligula, or of Nero! Nor can any sane man be persuaded that so many laws were enacted by the Church regarding the sanctity and stability of marriage (Can. Apost., 16, 17, 18), and regarding marriages between slaves and free women (Philosophum. Oxon., 1851), by authority derived from the Roman emperors, the deadliest enemies of the Christian name, who desired nothing more earnestly than to extirpate by violence and blood the growing religion of Christ; more especially as the law which proceeded from the Church differed so widely from the civil law that Ignatius the Martyr (Epist. ad Polycarp. cap. 5), Justin (Apolog. mai., n. 15), Athenagoras (Legat. pro Christian., nn. 32, 33), and Tertullian (De coron. milit., cap. 13) publicly denounced as immoral, and even adulterous, marriages which, nevertheless, the imperial laws allowed. But when all power came into the hands of the Christian emperors, the Supreme Pontiffs and the bishops, assembled in council, continued always, with the same liberty and the same knowledge of their own right, to command and to forbid in matrimonial affairs as seemed to them to be useful and in conformity with the requirements of the times, no matter how inconsistent it might be with the civil institutions of the day. No one is ignorant that many rules were made on the subject of impediments arising from obligations, vows, disparity of worship, consanguinity, crime, or public decency, by the prelates of the Church at the Councils of Elvira (De Aguirre, Conc. Hispan, tom. i., can. 13, 15, 16, 17), Arles (Harduin., Act. Concil., tom. i., can. 11), Chalcedon (Harduin., Act. Concil., tom. i., can. 16), Milevis (Harduin., Act. Concil., tom. i., can. 17), and other councils, which frequently are far different from the decrees sanctioned by the imperial law. And so far were princes from claiming any power for themselves in the matter of Christian marriages, that they declared and acknowledged that that power, in all its plenitude, was vested in the Church. In fact, Honorius, Theodosius the Younger, and Justinian (Novel. 137) did not hesitate to admit that in matters which concerned marriage they had no right to do anything except as the guardians and defenders of the sacred canons. And if they made any decrees regarding impediments to marriage, they of their own accord explained the reason to be that they had taken this upon themselves by the permission and authority of the Church (Fejer, *Matrim. ex. instit. Christ.*; Pesth. 1835), whose decision they were accustomed to ask for and reverently to receive in disputes concerning the legitimacy of children (cap. 3, *de ordin. cognit.*), concerning divorces (cap. 3, *de divort.*), and, in fine, all matters having any kind of relation to the matrimonial bond (cap. 13, *qui filii sint legit*). Wherefore it was most justly decreed by the Council of Trent that the Church has power "to define the impediments which make matrimony void, and that matrimonial causes belong to the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical judges." (Trid., sess. xxiv., can. 4.)

Nor let any one be led astray by that distinction so sedulously urged by regalists, according to which they separate the nuptial contract from

the sacrament, in order that while judgment respecting the sacraments is reserved to the Church, they may give over the contract to the authority and decision of the civil power. For a distinction, or rather a disjunction, of this nature cannot be established; inasmuch as it is manifest that in Christian matrimony it is not possible to separate the contract from the sacrament, and, therefore, that there cannot be a true and legitimate contract without its being, on that very account, a sacrament. For Christ Our Lord raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament; and matrimony is the contract itself, provided only that it be lawfully made. In addition to which, matrimony is a sacrament for this reason, that it is a sacred sign conveying grace, and presenting an image of the mystic nuptials of Christ with the Church. But the form and figure of these is expressed by that bond of perfect unity by which man and wife are joined together, and which is nothing else but matrimony itself. Therefore it is evident that every lawful marriage between Christians is in and by itself a sacrament; and nothing can be more opposed to truth than that the sacrament is but an ornamental addition, or a character imparted from without, which may be separated and disjoined from the contract at will. Wherefore it is neither established by reasoning nor proved by historical evidence that authority over Christian marriage is rightly given to the state. And if in this matter the right of others has been violated, no one can say that it has been violated by the Church.

And would that the teachings of the naturalists, so full of falsehood and injustice, were not equally fruitful in mischiefs and calamities. But it is easy to perceive what evil the profaning of marriages brings about, and how much it is likely to inflict upon the whole of human society. For in the beginning it was divinely ordained that we should find those things instituted by God and by nature more useful and more salutary in proportion as they remain whole and immutable in their original condition; since God the Creator of all things well knew what was expedient for the establishment and preservation of each, and so ordained all by His will and judgment that each should have its appropriate development. But if the temerity or the wickedness of men seek to change and to disturb the order of providence, then indeed even things which have been most wisely and most advantageously instituted begin to be injurious, or cease to be beneficial, either because by change they have lost the power of doing good, or because it is the will of God to punish in this manner the pride and audacity of men. They who deny the sanctity of marriage, and cast it, stripped of all sanctity, into the order of profane things, pervert the fundamental principles of nature, and, while they fight against the counsels of divine providence, at the same time to the extent of their power destroy its work. Wherefore it is not wonderful that from such insane and impious attempts there springs a crop of evils than which nothing can be more pernicious to the salvation of souls and the safety of the state.

If it be considered to what the divine institution of marriage tends, it will be very evident that it was the will of God to comprise in it the most

abundant sources of public happiness and security. And plainly, marriages, besides that they are intended for the propagation of the human race, tend to make the life of married people more virtuous and more happy; and this in several ways, as, by mutual assistance to relieve necessities, by constant and faithful love, by the community of all possessions, and by the celestial grace that goes forth from the sacrament. And the same causes are most powerful in promoting the welfare of families; for marriages, as long as they are in accordance with nature and fitly correspond with the designs of God, possess a power to confirm a spirit of concord among parents, to promote the good education of children, to temper paternal power by proposing the example of the power of God, to make sons obedient to their parents, servants to their masters. From such marriages states may justly expect a progeny of citizens who will be animated with virtuous sentiments, imbued with the love and fear of God, and will deem it their duty to obey just and legitimate authority, to love all, to injure none.

These fruits, so many and so great, holy matrimony produced so long as it retained the attributes of sanctity, of unity, and of perpetuity, from which it derived all its fertile and salutary force; nor can it be doubted that it would still have produced similar and equal results if at all times and in all places it had been in the power and care of the Church, which is at all times the most faithful guardian and vindicator of those attributes. But because, ere long, in various places the law of men was made to take the place of the divine and natural law, not only did that most exalted form and conception of marriage which nature had impressed, and, as it were, engraved, on the minds of men, begin to be obliterated, but even in Christian marriages its power, the source of such great blessings, was, through the wickedness of men, greatly weakened. For what benefit can nuptial unions confer from which the Christian religion, which is the parent of all good, and which fosters the greatest virtues, exciting and urging to everything which adorns a generous and exalted soul, is banished? When it is put aside and rejected marriage must needs be made a slave to the corrupt nature of man and the passions, which are the worst of rulers, protected only by the weak defense of natural virtue. Manifold evil, derived from this source, has resulted not only to private families, but to nations also. For when the salutary fear of God is removed, and when that alleviation of troubles which is to be found nowhere more effectual than in the Christian religion is taken away, it often and naturally happens that the duties and obligations of marriage appear almost intolerable; and many inordinately desire the loosening of the bond, which they imagine to have been tied by human law and choice, if difference of disposition, or quarrels, or infidelity on the part of one or the other, or mutual consent, or any other cause make them think it expedient. And if the law denies satisfaction to the wantonness of their desires, they exclaim that the laws are unjust, inhuman, and opposed to the rights of

free citizens, and that some provision must be made for their abolition and the introduction of milder laws to facilitate divorce.

But the legislators of our times, while they profess themselves tenacious and studious of the same principles of right, cannot even, though they desire it ever so much, guard themselves from that wickedness of men of which we spoke; wherefore the times must be yielded to, and the faculty of divorce granted. History herself declares the same thing. For, to pass by other instances, towards the end of the last century, in that conflagration rather than disturbance of France, when all society was profaned and God was set aside, it was decided that the severance of married couples should be ratified by the laws. And many wish those same laws to be revived at this time, because they would have God and the Church driven from our midst, and removed from intercourse with human society, foolishly supposing that the last remedy for the great increase of corruption in morals is to be sought in laws of this description.

It is scarcely necessary to say of how much evil divorce is productive. It is the fruitful cause of mutable marriage compacts; it diminishes mutual affection; it supplies a pernicious stimulus to unfaithfulness; it is injurious to the care and education of children: it gives occasion to the breaking up of domestic society; it scatters the seed of discord among families; it lessens and degrades the dignity of women, who incur the danger of being abandoned when they shall have subserved the lust of their husbands. And since nothing tends so effectually as the corruption of morals to ruin families and undermine the strength of kingdoms, it may easily be perceived that divorce is especially hostile to the prosperity of families and states; for divorce springs from the corrupt morals of nations, and, as experience teaches, opens the way and the door to more vicious habits of private and public life. And these evils will appear to be all the more serious if we consider that no restraint will be strong enough to confine the faculty of divorce, when once conceded, within fixed and foreseen limits. The force of example is very great, and greater still that of lust. From these exciting causes it must result that the desire of divorce, daily creeping on further, will invade the minds of a large number of persons, like a malady spread by contagion, or a flood of water that has burst its barriers.

These things surely are clear of themselves, but they become clearer by recalling past events. As soon as the way for divorce began to be rendered safe by law, dissensions, jealousies, separations enormously increased, and so shameful a manner of living was arrived at that those very persons who had been the defenders of such separations repented of what they had done, and unless they had in time sought a remedy in laws of a contrary character there would have been cause for fear lest the commonwealth itself should rush headlong to destruction. The ancient Romans are said to have looked with horror on the first example of divorce; but ere long the sense of honesty began to be blunted in their

minds, modesty with its controlling power to die out, and nuptial fidelity to be violated with so great license that what we read in some writers seems to have a striking semblance of truth, namely, that women had become accustomed to count years, not by the change of consuls, but by the change of husbands. In like manner among Protestants, at first, indeed, the laws had sanctioned divorce for certain causes, and those, to say the truth, not many in number; but it has been found that these causes have, through the near connection of things resembling one another, increased to such an extent among the Germans, Americans, and others, that they whose understandings were not blunted considered the boundless depravation of morals and the insufferable rashness of the laws as deeply to be lamented. Nor was it otherwise in states called Catholic, in which, if at any time the severance of marriage ties was admitted, the multitude of inconveniences which ensued far exceeded the expectations of legislators. For the wickedness of very many persons led them to turn their minds to all sorts of malice and fraud, and by means of cruelty, by injuries, by adulteries, to invent causes for dissolving with impunity that bond of matrimonial union of which they were tired; and this with so great detriment to public honesty that all judged it necessary that the laws should as soon as possible be amended. And who will doubt but that the laws favoring divorce will be followed by wretched and calamitous results wherever they may happen to be revived in our own age? Certainly the contrivances or decrees of men have not the power to change the natural character and conformation of things; wherefore they bring a small amount of wisdom to bear on the public welfare who think that the genuine theory of marriage can be perverted with impunity, and, setting aside all sanctity of religion and of sacrament, seem to wish to disfigure and deform matrimony more shamefully than even the institutions of the heathen were wont to do. And, therefore, unless their counsels change, families and society will constantly have to fear for themselves lest they be hurled most miserably into that universal strife and conflict which has long since been proposed by the flagitious bands of socialists and communists. Hence it is clear how unsuitable and absurd it is to expect public welfare from divorce, which will issue rather in the certain dissolution of society.

It must, therefore, be confessed that the Catholic Church has consulted best for the common good of all people in guarding with constant attention the sanctity and perpetuity of marriage. Nor is little gratitude due to her for having openly remonstrated against the civil laws that for a hundred years past have been sinning in this particular (Pius VI., epist. ad episc. Lucion., 28 Maii, 1793; Pius VII., litter. encycl. die 17 Febr. 1809, et Const. dat. die 19 Jul. 1817; Pius VIII., litt. encycl. die 29 Maii, 1829; Gregorius XVI., Const. dat. die 15 Augusti, 1832; Pius IX., alloc. habit. die 22 Sept. 1852); for having smitten with anathema the pernicious heresy of Protestants concerning divorce and repudiation (Trid.,

sess., xxiv., can. 5, 7); for having in many ways condemned the dissolution of marriages practiced by the Greeks (Concil. Floren., et Instr. Eug. IV. ad Armenos; Bened. XIV., *Etsi pastoralis*, 6 Maii, 1742); for having decreed those nuptials to be null and void which were contracted under the condition that they might at some time or other be dissolved (cap. 7, *de condit appos.*); lastly, for having even from the earliest ages repudiated the imperial laws which perniciously favored divorce and the breaking off of the marriage contract (Hieron., epist. 79 ad Ocean; Ambros., lib. viii., in cap. 16 Lucae, n. 5; August., de nuptiis, cap. 10). In truth, whenever the Supreme Pontiffs resisted most powerful princes demanding with threats to have divorces granted by themselves ratified by the Church, they are to be regarded as having combated not only for the integrity of religion but also for the security of the human race. On which account all posterity admires the proofs of an invincible mind afforded by Nicholas I. in conflict with Lothaire; by Urban II. and Paschal II. struggling against Philip I., King of France; by Celestine III. and Innocent III. against Alfonso of Leon and Philip II. of France; by Clement VII. and Paul III. against Henry VIII., and lastly by the holy and brave Pontiff, Pius VII., against Napoleon I., uplifted by prosperity and the greatness of his empire.

This being the case, all rulers and administrators of public affairs, if they wished to follow reason and wisdom, and to be really useful to the people, ought to have preferred to let the sacred laws of matrimony remain intact, and to apply the proffered assistance of the Church to the guardianship of morals and the prosperity of families, rather than to cast upon the Church itself the suspicion of hostility, and charge it falsely and unjustly with the violation of civil rights.

And that all the more, because, as the Catholic Church can in no respect depart from religious duty and defence of its rights, so is it habitually inclined to kindness and indulgence in all things which can be made to consist with the integrity of its rights and the sanctity of its duties. For which reason it has never determined anything respecting matrimony without having due regard to the state of the community and to the condition of populations; nor has it on one occasion only, mitigated, as far as it could, the prescriptions of its own laws when there were just and grave causes for such a modification. The Church itself likewise does not ignore or deny that the sacrament of marriage, since it is directed towards the preservation and increase of human society, has a relationship and intimacy with human matters, which are consequences, indeed, of matrimony, but belong to the civil order; and the rulers of the state rightly take cognizance and judge of these. But no one doubts that Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Church, willed the sacred power to be distinct from the civil power, and each power to be free and unhampered in the conduct of its own affairs; yet with this addition, which is expedient for each and for the interests of all men, namely, that there should be a union and

concord between them, and that in those things which are, though in different ways, matters of common right and judgment, the one to which human affairs are committed should depend suitably and fittingly on the other, to which are intrusted the things of Heaven. But in an agreement, or harmony, as it were, of this description is contained not only the best mode of operation of each of the two powers, but also the most opportune and efficacious means of helping the human race in what appertains to the conduct of human life and the hope of everlasting salvation. For, as we showed in former Encyclical Letters, the intelligence of men, if it agrees with Christian faith, is much ennobled and comes forth much better armed for the avoidance and repulsion of error, and faith in its turn borrows no small assistance from intelligence; so, in like manner, if the civil authority agrees amicably with the sacred power of the Church, a great increase of usefulness accrues of necessity to both. For the dignity of the one is amplified, and under the guidance of religion the government will never be unjust; while to the other are supplied protection and defence for the public good of the faithful. Therefore, moved by the consideration of these things, as we have at other times earnestly, so now again at the present time we urgently exhort princes and men in authority to concord and friendship; and we are the first to extend to them, as it were, our right hand with paternal benevolence, offering the assistance of our supreme power, which is the more necessary at this time in proportion as the right of sovereign rule is, in the opinion of men, weakened, as if it had received a wound. For the minds of multitudes being inflamed with riotous liberty, and casting off with nefarious boldness every restraint of government, even the most legitimate, public safety requires that men should associate to prevent the injury of both powers, injury which impends not merely over the Church, but also over civil society itself.

But while we strongly advise a friendly union of wills and dispositions, and pray God, the Prince of Peace, that He would infuse the love of concord into the minds of all men, we cannot refrain, Venerable Brethren, from exhorting yourselves more and more to use your diligence, your zeal and vigilance, which we know to be very great. As far as you can attain it by efforts and by your authority, strive with diligence that among the people intrusted to your fidelity the entire and uncorrupted doctrine be retained which Christ the Lord and the apostolic interpreters of the heavenly will have delivered, and which the Catholic Church herself has religiously preserved and commanded the faithful in Christ to preserve through all ages.

Take especial care of this, that the people abound in precepts of Christian wisdom, and always retain in memory that marriage was instituted in the beginning, not by the will of man, but by the authority and command of God, and was sanctioned entirely under this law, that it should be of one to one; and that Christ, the author of the new covenant, translated that alliance into a sacrament, and, as far as regards the bond, ascribed to

His Church the lawgiving and judicial authority. In which matter the greatest care must be taken lest the mind be led into error by the fallacious conclusions of adversaries, who would take away this power from the Church. In like manner it ought to be recognized by all, that if any union of man and woman among the faithful of Christ be contracted without the sacrament it is wanting in the force and character of a true marriage; and although it be effected in agreement with the civil laws, yet it can have no greater value than that of a rite or custom introduced by the civil law; but it must also be remembered that such things only can be ordered and administered by the civil law which are the consequences of marriage in the civil order, and which it is evident cannot be produced except a true and legitimate cause for them, namely, a nuptial bond, really exists. It is, in the highest degree, of importance that the married should fully understand and recognize the truth of these things; which ought indeed to be accepted and understood, so that they may in this matter comply with the laws; for the Church does not refuse, but on the contrary wills and hopes that the due effects of marriage should be preserved intact in all respects, and that no detriment may be entailed on the offspring. In such confusion of opinions, however, which daily advance, this also is necessary to be known, that it is not in the power of any one to dissolve the bond of a marriage solemnized and consummated among Christians; and that they are guilty of a crime who, being man and wife, whatever cause may be alleged, wish to entangle themselves in a new matrimonial bond before the first is broken by death. But if things have gone so far that living together seems to be insupportable any longer, then indeed the Church allows one to live apart from the other, and all care being taken and remedies applied to the condition of the married couple, she studies how she may mitigate the inconveniences of separation, nor does she ever cease to labor for the re-establishment of concord, or despair of bringing it about. But these are extremities to which it would be easy not to descend if married persons were not actuated by lust, but, having duly considered both the duties and the elevated motives of matrimony, came to it with proper dispositions, and wedlock were not preceded by a continuous series of offences displeasing to God. To sum up all in a few words, marriages will be blessed with peaceful and quiet constancy if the wedded pair draw their breath and life from the power of religion, of whose gift it comes that the mind is strong and unconquerable, and by whose existence personal faults, if such exist, discrepancy of habits and dispositions, the weight of maternal cares, the toil and anxiety about the education of children, the attendant labors of existence, and adverse circumstances may be borne, not only with moderation, but even willingly and gladly.

Care ought also to be taken lest alliances be lightly sought with those who are strangers to the Catholic name and faith, for it can scarcely be hoped that minds which are at variance in respect of religious doctrine

should be in accord on other matters. Indeed it is most evident that marriages of this kind should be avoided from the fact of their giving occasion to forbidden communion in sacred things; they create danger to the religion of a Catholic spouse, they are a hindrance to the good education of the children, and very frequently they dispose the mind to become accustomed to take equal account of all religions, and to lose sight of the distinction between true and false. In the last place, since we thoroughly understand that no one ought to be an alien from our charity, we commend those, Venerable Brethren, to your authority, faith, and piety, who, being indeed extremely wretched, are carried away by the tide of their lusts, and, being altogether unmindful of their own salvation, live contrary to law and right not united in a bond of lawful wedlock. Let your skill and diligence be employed in recalling such to their duty; and do you in every way strive, both by yourselves and with the interposition of good men, that they may perceive that they have acted wickedly, that they may do penance for their sin, and may turn their minds seriously towards proper nuptials celebrated with Catholic rites.

You easily perceive, Venerable Brethren, that these instructions and precepts respecting Christian marriage, which we have resolved to communicate to you, pertain strictly no less to the preservation of civil society than to the everlasting salvation of men. May God grant, therefore, that the more weight and importance these instructions have, the more they may find everywhere minds docile and prompt to obey. On this account let us all alike, with suppliant and humble prayer, implore the aid of the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, that, by exciting minds to the obedience of faith, she may show herself to men as their mother and helper. Nor let us implore with less earnestness Peter and Paul, the princes of the Apostles, the conquerors of superstition, the sowers of the seed of truth, that they may preserve the human race from the deluge of returning errors by their most powerful patronage.

Meanwhile, as pledge of heavenly gifts and witness of Our singular good-will, We from the heart impart to you all, Venerable Brethren, and to the people intrusted to your vigilance, Our apostolic benediction.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the tenth day of February, in the year 1880, the second year of Our Pontificate.

LEO PP. XIII.