

## **IN DEFENSE OF CATHOLIC ACTION**

**Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira**



**IN DEFENSE OF CATHOLIC ACTION**

**Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira**

The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, Property—TFP  
Spring Grove, Penn. 17362

Cover illustration:

First English Edition (October 2006)

Translated by The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property® - TFP®

Copyright © 2006 The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property® - TFP®

1358 Jefferson Road, Spring Grove, Penn. 17362

Tel.: (866) 661-0272

[www.tfp.org](http://www.tfp.org)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property® - TFP®.

The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property® and TFP® are registered names of The Foundation for a Christian Civilization, Inc., a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

<b>LETTER FROM THE HOLY SEE.....</b>	<b>XIII</b>
<b>PASSING THE TEST OF TIME.....</b>	<b>XV</b>
<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>XXV</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>XXVII</b>
HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF THE AMBIENCE IN WHICH CATHOLIC ACTION EMERGED .....	XXVII
a) Disorganization of the Liberal States .....	xxvii
b) Universal Panic .....	xxvii
c) Dictatorships.....	xxviii
d) The Supreme Catastrophe.....	xxviii
PIUS XI FOUNDS CATHOLIC ACTION .....	XXVIII
<i>Hopes and Triumphs</i> .....	xxix
<i>Exaggerations</i> .....	xxix
<i>Errors:</i> .....	xxix
a) Regarding Spiritual Life .....	xxix
b) Regarding Apostolate .....	xxx
c) Regarding Discipline .....	xxx
THE REASON FOR THIS BOOK .....	XXX
THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE WRITE IT .....	XXXI
SUAVE TRUTHS, AUSTERE TRUTHS .....	XXXII
DANGEROUS ONE-SIDEDNESS .....	XXXIII
CHARACTER OF THIS WORK .....	XXXIII
<b>PART I.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>JURIDICAL CHARACTER OF CATHOLIC ACTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DOCTRINE ON CATHOLIC ACTION AND THE MANDATE OF THE HIERARCHY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
THE ORIGIN OF CATHOLIC ACTION'S PRESENT ORGANIZATIONS.....	3
JURIDICAL CHARACTER OF CATHOLIC ACTION: THE MANDATE OF CATHOLIC ACTION.....	3
NOTIONS ABOUT THE MANDATE .....	3
ECCLESIASTICAL AND CIVIL MEANING OF "MANDATE" .....	4
HIERARCHICAL CHARACTER OF CATHOLIC ACTION DEDUCED FROM THE MANDATE .....	4
CONCRETE CONSEQUENCES:.....	5
a) Regarding Other Lay Organizations .....	5
b) Regarding the Hierarchy .....	6
c) Regarding the Organization and Methods of Apostolate of Catholic Action .....	7
IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS.....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>REFUTATION OF THE ERRONEOUS DOCTRINES .....</b>	<b>8</b>
DEVELOPMENT OF SOME NOTIONS GIVEN IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER .....	8
PHILOSOPHICAL INCONSISTENCY OF THE DOCTRINES DESCRIBED IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.....	8
OF THE VARIOUS KINDS OF COLLABORATION .....	9

ALL HAVE THE SAME ESSENCE .....	9
AND PRODUCE ANALOGOUS CONSEQUENCES .....	9
DISTINCTION BETWEEN MANDATE AND COLLABORATION .....	10
MANDATE AND DELEGATION .....	11
SUMMARY OF THE NOTIONS GIVEN IN THIS CHAPTER THUS FAR .....	11
MANDATE AND COLLABORATION IN REGARD TO THE LAY APOSTOLATE.....	12
THE MANDATE IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO GIVE CATHOLIC ACTION A JURIDICAL ESSENCE DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF OTHER LAY ORGANIZATIONS .....	13
THE MANDATE IS MERELY A WAY OF GRANTING POWERS. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE POWERS GRANTED.....	13
THERE ARE OTHER WORKS ENDOWED WITH A MANDATE WHICH HAVE NEVER BEEN ATTRIBUTED A JURIDICAL ESSENCE DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF OTHER WORKS OF LAY APOSTOLATE.....	14
SOME FAITHFUL ARE ALSO ENDOWED WITH MANDATES, BUT THAT DOES NOT CHANGE THEIR STATUS OF SUBJECTS IN HOLY MOTHER CHURCH .....	16
PAPAL DOCUMENTS .....	16
SUMMONSES AND MANDATES PREVIOUS TO THE CREATION OF THE PRESENT STRUCTURE OF CATHOLIC ACTION .....	17
CONCLUSION .....	18
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>THE TRUE NATURE OF THE MANDATE OF CATHOLIC ACTION .....</b>	<b>21</b>
THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MANDATE GIVEN TO THE HIERARCHY BY OUR LORD AND THE MANDATE GIVEN BY THE HIERARCHY TO CATHOLIC ACTION .....	21
WHAT THIS DIFFERENCE IS NOT .....	21
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MANDATE RECEIVED BY THE HIERARCHY.....	21
IN WHAT SENSE CAN CATHOLIC ACTION COLLABORATE WITH THE HIERARCHY?.....	23
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MANDATE OF THE LAITY .....	23
ARE THERE IN THE CHURCH MANDATES OTHER THAN THOSE RECEIVED BY THE HIERARCHY?.....	23
THE GREAT HIERARCHICAL MANDATE—THE VARIOUS MANDATES OF THE SUBJECTS .....	24
a) That in Which They Are Equal—First Distinction .....	24
b) In What They Are Different - Second Distinction.....	25
THE LEADERS OF CATHOLIC ACTION UNQUESTIONABLY HAVE A CERTAIN AUTHORITY; BUT ONE CANNOT CLAIM THAT SUCH AUTHORITY HAS AN ESSENCE IDENTICAL TO THAT OF THE HIERARCHY.....	25
GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS .....	26
<b>CHAPTER 4 .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>THE DEFINITION OF PIUS XI .....</b>	<b>29</b>
ONE MORE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF THE HIERARCHICAL ESSENCE OF THE APOSTOLATE OF CATHOLIC ACTION: THE DEFINITION OF CATHOLIC ACTION BY HIS HOLINESS PIUS XI.....	29
ERRONEOUS THESES .....	29
THE MANNER OF REFUTING THESE THESES.....	29
THE ELEMENTS OF THE ISSUE .....	29
THE ERROR COMMON TO THE TWO STATEMENTS WE REFUTE.....	30
THE PARTICULAR ERROR OF THOSE WHO MAINTAIN THAT CATHOLIC ACTION PARTICIPATES IN THE HIERARCHY ....	32
THE PARTICULAR ERROR OF THOSE WHO MAINTAIN THAT CATHOLIC ACTION HAS HIERARCHICAL FUNCTIONS .....	33
CONCLUSION .....	34
EVEN IF THE PREVIOUSLY REFUTED THESES WERE ADMISSIBLE, PIUS XI DID NOT GIVE CATHOLIC ACTION PARTICIPATION IN THE HIERARCHY OR IN HIERARCHICAL FUNCTIONS.....	34
ANALYSIS OF WHAT "HIERARCHICAL APOSTOLATE" IS .....	35
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIERARCHICAL APOSTOLATE AND LAY APOSTOLATE .....	35
DID THE DEFINITION OF PIUS XI GIVE THE LAITY A PARTICIPATION IN THE HIERARCHICAL POWERS? .....	37
VARIOUS MEANINGS OF "PARTICIPATION" .....	38
WHICH OF THEM IS THE LEGITIMATE ONE? .....	38

PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION .....	39
THE DEFINITION OF PIUS XI: ITS TRUE MEANING .....	39
SEMI-OFFICIAL CLARIFICATION OF THE DEFINITION OF PIUS XI.....	41
"PARTICIPATION" IN THE LIGHT OF CANON LAW .....	42
CONCLUSION .....	42
NOTICE.....	43
<b>CHAPTER 5.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>FUNDAMENTAL ERRORS .....</b>	<b>45</b>
A CONSEQUENCE OF THE ERRORS WE REFUTE.....	45
THE SITUATION OF THE CLERGY UNTIL NOW .....	45
HOW SOME INTEND TO BELITTLE AND ULTIMATELY DESTROY THIS SITUATION .....	46
CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF WHAT WOULD RESULT .....	47
ARE WE RETURNING TO THE TIME OF "MASONIFIED" CONFRATERNITIES?.....	48
WILL ONE OF OUR MOST BEAUTIFUL TRADITIONS DISAPPEAR TO OUR APPLAUSE? .....	49
WILL THE AUTHORITY OF THE PASTOR AND SCHOOL DIRECTORS BE MUTILATED? .....	49
TO WHAT WILL THE AUTHORITY OF THE BISHOPS BE REDUCED?.....	50
<b>CHAPTER 6.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>THE CLERGY IN CATHOLIC ACTION .....</b>	<b>52</b>
COMPLEXITY OF THE CHURCH'S GOVERNMENT .....	52
SPECIAL FORMATION OF THE CLERGY .....	52
INVALUABLE GUARANTEES WITH WHICH THE CHURCH PROTECTS HERSELF.....	53
ERRORS ABOUT THE ESSENCE OF CATHOLIC ACTION EXPOSE THESE GUARANTEES TO MOST GRAVE RISKS .....	53
IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS: .....	54
a) In Regard to the Intentions with Which Many People Defend These Errors .....	54
b) In Regard to the Advantage of the Spirit of Initiative and Frank Cooperation in the Laity .....	55
c) In Regard to the Preeminence of the Fundamental Organizations of Catholic Action over the Auxiliaries .....	56
<b>PART II.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>CATHOLIC ACTION AND THE INTERIOR LIFE .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>GRACE, FREE WILL, AND LITURGY .....</b>	<b>59</b>
LITURGY AND INTERIOR LIFE .....	59
THE "MANDATE" AND INTERIOR LIFE.....	60
TRADITIONAL ASCETICISM .....	60
THE WORK OF THE COUNTER-REFORMATION.....	61
THE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SEE.....	62
THE ORIGIN OF THESE ERRORS.....	62
THE RULES OF CHRISTIAN MODESTY .....	63
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>SIMILARITY TO "MODERNISM" .....</b>	<b>66</b>
A COMPLETE DOCTRINAL SYSTEM .....	66
DIFFICULT FOR OBSERVERS TO PERCEIVE .....	66
BECAUSE OF THE METHODS USED TO SPREAD IT.....	66

MAN SHOULD BE DELIVERED FROM THE SOURNESS OF THE INTERIOR STRUGGLE .....	67
GIVING AN ERRONEOUS LITURGICAL FORMATION .....	67
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.....</b>	<b>71</b>
LITURGY AND MORTIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SEE .....	71
DEVOTIONS APPROVED BY THE CHURCH MAY NOT BE ATTACKED .....	73
ONE CANNOT ADMIT CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE VARIOUS RELIGIOUS ORDERS .....	74
<b>PART III.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF CATHOLIC ACTION.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>ORGANIZATION, REGULATIONS, AND PENALTIES.....</b>	<b>81</b>
NEW CONCEPTS ON THE CATHOLIC LAY MOVEMENT .....	81
a) Regarding Various Devotions .....	81
b) Regarding Periodical Acts of Piety in Common .....	82
c) Regarding the Promotion of Intimate Sociability among Its Members and Having a Recreation Center .....	83
d) Regarding Rules on Attire, Fashions, and the Like .....	84
A CURIOUS CONTRADICTION .....	90
a) On Applying Penalties to Guilty Members .....	90
MEEKNESS AND PERSUASION BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE .....	91
IS IT A LACK OF CHARITY TO PUNISH? .....	92
THE REAL PANORAMA.....	93
SYSTEMATIC IMPUNITY IS A LACK OF CHARITY .....	93
a) Towards Society .....	93
b) For Those Who Merit Punishment .....	96
c) Toward Those in Danger .....	99
d) Toward the Good .....	99
PUNISHMENT DOES NOT DEPRIVE CATHOLIC ACTION OF USEFUL AUXILIARIES.....	100
NOR DOES IT HARM THE AMBIENCE OF CATHOLIC ACTION .....	101
LET US AVOID ANY KIND OF ONE-SIDEDNESS .....	104
THE SPIRIT OF "MASONIFIED" FRATERNITIES .....	107
PUNISHMENT IS A HARSH NECESSITY .....	108
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS.....</b>	<b>110</b>
TUMULTUOUS RECRUITING .....	110
DIMINISHES THE DIGNITY OF CATHOLIC ACTION .....	111
IS INEFFECTIVE .....	112
PARTICULARLY IN BRAZIL.....	112
HOW SHOULD CATHOLIC ACTION RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS? .....	113
MASSES OR ELITES? .....	114
A FUNDAMENTAL ALTERNATIVE.....	114
IRREPLACEABLE FECUNDITY OF THE ELITES.....	116
THE MIDDLE GROUND IS IMPOSSIBLE .....	117
THE VOICE OF THE POPES .....	119
INTERIOR LIFE IS SUPERIOR TO TECHNICAL FORMATION .....	120



**CHAPTER 3 ..... 125****AUXILIARY ASSOCIATIONS—THE "APOSTOLATE OF CONQUEST" 125**

THE PROBLEM .....	125
AUXILIARY ASSOCIATIONS MUST NOT DISAPPEAR .....	125
IT IS NO LESS SO WITH CATHOLIC ACTION.....	126
A SIMPLISTIC SOLUTION .....	127
THE PROBLEM'S TRUE CHARACTERISTICS .....	128
PIUS XII INDICATES NEW DIRECTIONS .....	128
ATTACKING THE PREROGATIVES OF CATHOLIC ACTION IS NEFARIOUS AND VAIN .....	129
A NOTHER FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM.....	133
THE PROBLEM'S TRUE ASPECT .....	133
CHARITY ESTABLISHES PRIORITIES .....	134
a) We Should Concern Ourselves Above All With the Sanctification and Perseverance of the Good .....	134
b) Secondly, We Should Bring Sinners Back to the Life of Grace .....	137
EXPANDING THIS DOCTRINE CANNOT HARM THE APOSTOLATE WITH INFIDELS AND HERETICS .....	139
"APOSTOLATE OF CONQUEST" .....	140
AN OBJECTION.....	142

**PART IV ..... 144****HOW SOME IN CATHOLIC ACTION PROPOSE TO DISSEMINATE THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH ..... 144****CHAPTER 1 ..... 147****HOW TO PRESENT CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ..... 147**

THERE IS A GREAT VARIETY OF SOULS .....	147
IMPLICITLY, THERE MUST BE A GREAT VARIETY OF APPROACHES IN THE APOSTOLATE.....	147
A "TECHNIQUE OF APOSTOLATE" THAT FAILS TO TAKE THIS FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH INTO ACCOUNT WILL ERR.....	148
"STRATEGIC RETREAT," THE ONLY METHOD OF APOSTOLATE .....	148
THE CROSS OF CHRIST DOES NOT DRIVE NEOPHYTES AWAY FROM CATHOLIC ACTION.....	149
THESE DOCTRINES ARE ERRONEOUS BECAUSE THEY PRESUPPOSE A FALSE PANORAMA .....	150
AND SO THEY FAIL TO EMPLOY RESOURCES OF GREAT IMPORTANCE .....	152
...RESOURCES OUR LORD EMPLOYED .....	153
...WHOSE REJECTION THE HOLY SEE CONDEMNED .....	154
IT IS SEVERELY PUNISHED BY GOD .....	158

**CHAPTER 2 ..... 161****THE "COMMON GROUND" TACTIC ..... 161**

THE "COMMON GROUND" TACTIC AND RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENTISM.....	161
THE "COMMON GROUND" TACTIC AND FERVENT CATHOLICS .....	161
THE TRUE ATTITUDE .....	162
AN IMPORTANT RESERVATION .....	164
LET US NOT HIDE THE AUSTERITY OF OUR RELIGION.....	165
LET US NOT DEIFY POPULARITY .....	167
THE CHURCH NEITHER DESPISES NOR REJECTS POPULARITY .....	168
NOR DOES SHE MAKE IT THE END OF HER EFFORTS .....	168
CONCLUSION .....	169
CHARITY CANNOT OBFUSCATE THE TRUTH .....	171
THE EXAMPLE OF BISHOP VITAL MARIA GONÇALVES DE OLIVEIRA .....	174

LET US ADJUST OUR METHODS TO THE PRESENT-DAY MENTALITY .....	174
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>THE "APOSTOLATE OF INFILTRATION" .....</b>	<b>180</b>
" <i>APOSTOLATE OF INFILTRATION</i> " .....	180
VARIETY OF AMBIENCES .....	180
PLURALITY OF ATTITUDES .....	181
HOW TO DO " <i>APOSTOLATE OF INFILTRATION</i> " .....	185
WHAT TO THINK OF DANCES? .....	186
<b>CHAPTER 4 .....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>NEUTRAL ASSOCIATIONS .....</b>	<b>193</b>
THE TERMS OF THE PROBLEM .....	193
THE SOLUTION .....	193
<b>CHAPTER 5 .....</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>THE "WORKSHOPS" .....</b>	<b>199</b>
THE DOCTRINE WE REFUTE .....	199
WHAT IS GOOD AND WHAT IS BAD ABOUT IT .....	201
SHOULD CATHOLIC ACTION USE WORKSHOPS? .....	203
<b>PART V .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>CONFIRMATION BY THE NEW TESTAMENT .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>IMPORTANCE OF THIS CHAPTER .....</b>	<b>209</b>
SINNERS BEFORE AND AFTER CHRIST .....	211
THE " <i>CUNNING OF THE SERPENT</i> " .....	212
THE IDOLATRY OF POPULARITY .....	215
EVANGELICAL PROCEDURE TOWARD MEN OF EVIL DOCTRINE .....	217
THE "COMMON GROUND" TACTIC .....	219
IN OUR LORD'S STEPS, LET US NOT GIVE UP WHEN OUR PRACTICE OF APOSTOLIC FRANKNESS SEEMS TO HAVE FAILED .....	227
THE PREACHING OF AUSTERE TRUTHS .....	232
LET US PREACH MORTIFICATION AND THE CROSS .....	234
FORTITUDE AND SAGACITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT .....	237
LET US FOLLOW THE LESSON OF THE GOSPEL WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS .....	248
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1 .....</b>	<b>257</b>

**CATHOLIC ACTION: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF A DEFINITION**

.....	<b>257</b>
1. <i>The Definition of Pius XI</i> .....	257
2. <i>Collaboration or Participation</i> .....	258
3. <i>In the First Encyclical of Pius XII</i> .....	258
4. <i>Precious Fruits of the Definition</i> .....	259
5. <i>Hierarchy and Laity</i> .....	260
6. <i>Knitting a Tighter Union Between Priesthood and Laity</i> .....	261
7. <i>At the Present Time</i> .....	262
8. <i>The Commission of Cardinals in Italy</i> .....	262
9. <i>The Ecclesiastical Assistants</i> .....	263
10. <i>Substantial Continuity of Catholic Action</i> .....	264

**APPENDIX 2 ..... 267****APOSTOLIC LETTER OF POPE PIUS X ON THE SILLON (AUGUST 25, 1910) ..... 267**

THE SILLON DID HAVE CONSIDERABLE QUALITIES.....	267
BUT THE GRAVITY OF ITS DEFECTS WAS EVEN GREATER.....	268
THAT FORCED THE POPE TO CONDEMN IT.....	268
THE SILLON TRIES TO DODGE CHURCH AUTHORITY.....	268
THE SILLON'S EGALITARIAN TENDENCIES ARE ERRONEOUS.....	269
EXPOUNDING THE SILLON'S SUBVERSIVE AND REVOLUTIONARY DOCTRINES.....	269
REFUTATION.....	272
THE EGALITARIAN STRUCTURE OF THE SILLON'S ORGANIZATION.....	274
THE ANARCHICAL SPIRIT IT INSTILLS.....	275
THE SILLON HAS A HATEFUL INTOLERANCE.....	275
EXCEPT WHEN IT COMES TO CHURCH PRINCIPLES.....	276
ONE OF SILLON'S GRAVE ERRORS IS INTERCONFESSIONALISM.....	276
FOR THIS REASON, THE SILLON CEASED BEING CATHOLIC.....	278
THE SILLON AND THE PLOTS OF CHURCH ENEMIES.....	278
THE SILLON CONVEYS A DISTORTED IDEA OF THE DIVINE REDEEMER.....	279
EXHORTATION TO THE EPISCOPATE.....	279
MEMBERS OF THE SILLON MUST OBEY.....	280

**NOTE TO THE READER..... 283**



## Letter from the Holy See

Secretariat of State  
of His Holiness

Vatican Palace, February 26, 1949

Illustrious Sir,

Your dedication and filial piety led you to offer the Holy Father the book, *In Defense of Catholic Action*, in which you show punctilious care and utmost diligence.

His Holiness rejoices with you for having explained and defended Catholic Action, which you know in its entirety and hold in high esteem, with penetration and clarity, so that it has become clear to everyone how opportune it is to study and promote this auxiliary form of the hierarchical apostolate.

The August Pontiff, with all his heart, presents his wishes that this work may bear rich and seasoned fruits, and that you may reap from it many and great consolations.

And as a token that this shall come to pass, he grants you the Apostolic Blessing.

For my part, with due consideration I remain devotedly yours,

G. B. Montini  
Substitute Secretary of State



## Passing the test of time

(This article was published in the monthly *Catolicismo*, no. 150, June 1963.)

Each phase of existence offers its own delights. In my days as a student, I had a special interest in looking for rare books, in the numerous stores that sold them second-hand.

Not infrequently in the course of those searches I found volumes the author had dedicated to this or that friend, with expressions that translated, at times a tender or bombastic friendship, at other times a poorly concealed feeling of superiority, and even a desire to gain the good graces of some illustrious intellectual or dangerous critic for the new book. I was never inclined to collect autographs. So I would immediately put the volume back on the shelf when it did not interest me. But I would ask myself: What would an author say, if he came here to buy a book, and saw that his friend had sold, for a paltry sum, not so much his book as the dedication on it, not so much the dedication as, in the final analysis, their friendship as well?

And then another idea occurred, startling me. If some day I should write a book and find a copy of it, with dedication, for sale in a used book store, what would I do? It seemed to me that the best solution to avoid such a humiliating possibility was the one I came to adopt: Not to publish any.

These apprehensions of youth came back to my mind as I put together ideas for the present article. And I said to myself that this distasteful experience is one from which the author of *In Defense of Catholic Action* is entirely free.

Indeed, since the book had been out of print for quite a while (all 2,500 copies—a large printing for the time) and he was unable to attend to continuous requests from interested people, Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira organized with some friends, I among them, a meticulous search in used book stores in São Paulo and other cities, hoping to buy back a few copies. The search proved entirely fruitless. He then went to the extreme of placing ads in the press asking if anyone would kindly sell him, second-hand, a copy of *In Defense of Catholic Action*, to no avail.

As it turned out, nothing is more unlikely than for him to find a volume of his work in a used book store.

## Explosion or Harmonious Music?

Yet, this it is not the only curious aspect of the history of this unique book.

Thus, for example, while *In Defense of Catholic Action* had a wide repercussion at the time, it certainly did not reach a large public properly so called, but remained circumscribed to that vast but somewhat restricted audience usually called “Catholic circles.” And I know that, paradoxically, not even the author himself wanted his work to extend beyond those limits. He believed that, since it dealt with specific problems of the Catholic movement, only in those circles could it be of interest and do some good.

On the other hand, it resonated in those circles like a bombshell. Many greeted it as an accurate and opportune salvo to ward off enormous dangers looming on the horizon. Others saw it

as a cause for dissent and scandal, a deplorable assertion by a narrow and backward mind, attached to erroneous doctrines and prone to imagining nonexistent problems.

I can still see today the favorable and contrary reactions. I remember the enthusiasm with which I read, in *Legionário*, letters of support by Their Excellencies Helvecio Gomes de Oliveira, Archbishop of Mariana, Atico Eusebio da Rocha, Archbishop of Curitiba, João Becker, Archbishop of Porto Alegre, Joaquim Domingues de Oliveira, Archbishop of Florianópolis, Antonio Augusto de Assis, Archbishop-Bishop of Jaboticabal, Otaviano Pereira de Albuquerque, Archbishop-Bishop of Campos, Alberto José Gonçalves, Archbishop-Bishop of Ribeirão Preto, José Maurício da Rocha, Bishop of Bragança, Henrique Cesar Fernandes Mourão, Bishop of Cafelândia, Antonio dos Santos, Bishop of Assis, Frei Luis of Santana, Bishop of Botucatu, Manuel da Silveira D'Elboux, Auxiliary Bishop of Ribeirão Preto (today Archbishop of Curitiba), Ernesto de Paula, Bishop of Jacarezinho (today Bishop Emeritus of Geroesarea), Otavio Chagas de Miranda, Bishop of Pouso Alegre, Frei Daniel Hostin, Bishop of Lajes, Juvencio de Brito, Bishop of Caetité, Francisco de Assis Pires, Bishop of Crato, Florencio Sisínio Vieira, Bishop of Amargosa, Severino Vieira, Bishop of Piauí, and Frei Germano Vega Campón, Bishop Prelate of Jataí.

More than anything else, I remember the deep impression I had, like most Catholics, as I read the prestigious preface with which the Apostolic Nuncio to Brazil, Dom Bento Aloisi Masella, introduced the book to the nation. Brazil venerated that Prelate as the perfect Nuncio, an opinion Pope Pius XII confirmed by making him a cardinal. I also remember the opposite reaction, which it is still too early—even after twenty years—to speak about at length.

It is not without sacrifice that I will be brief in this regard, as I would particularly enjoy letting my memory speak out and fill possible gaps with pieces from the rich and well organized file of Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. However, it is superfluous to digress about such dreams, as I know that in the present circumstances the author of *In Defense of Catholic Action* would not give me the much-coveted documentation.

Be it as it may, and resuming the course of my narration, as I glance at the past, for the sake of historical objectivity I cannot close my eyes to the opponents' reaction, and a quick word about it would be in order.

### **A Three-Phased Reaction**

That reaction had three phases. It failed in the first, failed again in the second, but was fully successful in the third.

The first phase was one of threats. I still remember that, just back from a trip to the State of Minas, my then young friend José de Azeredo Santos—who later became a well known polemicist of indomitable coherence—informed us well humored and amused: “I was with Friar B.C., who told me a commission of theologians was set up to refute Plínio's book. Friar B.C. says he will be sorry he published it.” But we knew that *In Defense of Catholic Action* had been thoroughly analyzed by two theologians already famous in Brazil, Msgr. Antonio de Castro Mayer and Father Geraldo Sigaud, so we did not worry and simply waited for the refutation. But nothing ever came.

As I write these lines, I also think of a card a very illustrious and respectable personality sent Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira thanking him for the book and saying he would soon publicly denounce the “errors” it contained. Twenty years have elapsed but nothing was ever published. How many other episodes like this could be told!



As threats of a refutation remained unfulfilled, next came the rumor phase. The book contained errors. Numerous errors! They did not say what they were. All they knew was that they were there. But there was no longer any mention of refutation, only a relentless harping on the same vague accusation throughout Brazil: There are errors, errors, errors! As Napoleon used to say, repetition is the best figure of rhetoric. But in spite of it all, *In Defense of Catholic Action* continued to move quickly in the bookstores.

Finally, the book sold out. In the course of time, it accomplished its difficult mission, which I will delve into below. A reprint therefore did not seem opportune. The rumors also gradually subsided. One would say that by the natural order of things, silence was falling upon the whole “affair.” But that was actually the beginning of the third phase—smooth, pervasive, and domineering.

Suddenly, in 1949, the silence is broken. From the heights of the Vatican, a voice makes itself heard, that dispels all doubts and makes the book invulnerable both from the standpoint of its doctrine and timeliness. It is a letter of praise from Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, then Substitute Secretary of State, written to Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira on behalf of the unforgettable Pius XII.

Yet, even at that, the deafening silence about the book continued. As far as I know, this is the only Brazilian work entirely and specifically written about Catholic Action which has been the object of a letter of praise by the Vicar of Christ. However, I am not aware that it is usually cited in works and bibliographies on Catholic Action that appear among us from time to time.

And the silence continued. Today—if only for a few minutes—that silence is interrupted as I write this preface, if only to avoid the obsolescence with which history punishes excessive inertia. But after this it will continue.

## **The Singular Destiny of a Book**

In short, all this explains why you cannot find *In Defense of Catholic Action* in used bookstores. Some people actually keep it on their shelves with affection, as if it contained a precious elixir. Others lock it inside a drawer with panic, as if it were a flask of arsenic. Thus, the history of this book turned out to be completely different than I, who watched its launching with enthusiasm, or its apologists or detractors, could ever have imagined in the bygone days of June 1943.

## **Liturgical Movement, Catholic Action, Social Action**

Around 1935, Brazil began to receive the vibrant influence of the large Catholic movements that arose with the great religious upsurge in post World War I Europe. Foremost among them was the liturgical movement whose foundations the great Dom Prosper Guéranger had laid in Solesmes already in the last century,<sup>1</sup> opening the eyes of the faithful to the supernatural value, doctrinal wealth and incomparable beauty of the Sacred Liturgy. That movement of spiritual renewal attained

---

<sup>1</sup> On the role of Abbot Prosper Guéranger in the liturgical movement worldwide, see article in *Legionário* (Feb. 13, 1942) by the late Archabbot of the Benedictine Congregation of Brazil, Dom Lourenço Zeller, Bishop Emeritus of Dorileia.

its full blossoming precisely in the period 1918-1939, at the same time as a great apostolic development, guided by the firm hand of Pius XI, spread throughout the Catholic world. Under Pius XI, Catholic Action, which as an organization of apostolate dated back in some way to the glorious days of Pius IX, assumed the fullness of its characteristic traits. It was a mobilization of all the laity as a single army of varied elements, to carry out a similarly unique but multi-faceted task: a total infusion of the spirit of Jesus Christ into the tormented society of the time. Along with this effort, and as a harmonious complement to it, there came about an admirable flourishing of social works inspired mainly in the Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* and aiming specifically at presenting and putting into practice a Christian solution to the social question. It was social action.

Naturally, these three great elements, which mutually complete one another, for this very reason became interwoven. And, full of enthusiasm, the flower of Catholic youth, first in Europe, and later, by way of repercussion, in Brazil, converged toward them.

### Clouds on the Horizon

Whenever Providence raises up a good movement, the spirit of darkness seeks to slip into it in order to distort it. Thus it was since the beginnings of the Church, when heresies popped up even in the catacombs, seeking to drag to evil the flock of Jesus Christ already decimated by persecution. The same happens today, and that is how the devil will continue to work until the end of time.

The spirit of our century, born of the French Revolution, thus infiltrated certain circles in the liturgical movement, Catholic Action, and social action. And those imbued with that spirit sought, on the pretense of promoting Catholic values, to actually present them in a distorted fashion according to the maxims of the Revolution.

### Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

It would be far too long to mention here all that appears on the pages of *In Defense of Catholic Action* about this infiltration and its numerous manifestations. But a schematic enumeration of the main characteristics of the phenomenon is appropriate.

The spirit of the French Revolution was essentially secular and naturalistic. “Liberty, equality and fraternity” was the motto the Revolution adopted in its attempt to reform society. The influence of that spirit and motto is found in each of the multiple errors refuted in this book by Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira.

**Egalitarianism.** As everyone knows, Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Church as a hierarchical society, in which, according to the teaching of Pius X, to some it belongs to teach, govern and sanctify, and to others to be governed, taught and sanctified.<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, this distinction of two classes within the Church cannot be pleasing to the modern mentality shaped by the Revolution. It is no wonder, therefore, that in regard to Catholic Action a theory arose which, in the final analysis, tended to level Clergy and faithful. Pius XI defined Catholic Action as a participation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church. Since he who participates has a part, it was argued, the laymen enrolled in Catholic Action have a

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St. Pius X, Encyclical *Vehementer Nos*, Feb. 11, 1906, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10law.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10law.htm)

part in the mission and task of the Hierarchy. They are, therefore, hierarchs in miniature. They are no longer mere subjects of the Hierarchy, but, so to speak, almost a fringe of it.

**Liberalism.** At the same time as a legitimate interest and zeal for the Sacred Liturgy appeared in the ranks of Catholic Action, several exaggerations of the so-called “liturgism” also popped up in it.

The profession of these errors, as is inherent to the liberal spirit, produced an attitude of open criticism and independence regarding the doctrine taught by the Holy See and the practices that it approved, praised and encouraged.

Accordingly, this new mentality belittled personal piety to promote exclusively liturgical acts; displayed reticence toward devotion to Our Lady and the Saints, which it viewed as incompatible with a “Christ-centered” formation; and manifested a certain disdain for the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius as obsolete practices. All this flies in the face of numerous papal documents highly recommending such devotions and practices.

Perhaps even more significant was the influence of liberalism on the opinion, advocated in certain circles, that Catholic Action should not establish a modesty dress code for its members, nor should it have regulations imposing special duties and punishments for violations thereof.

The same influence clearly surfaced in the idea that no rigor was needed in the process to select new members of Catholic Action, though paradoxically it was said to be an elite organization.

**Fraternity.** Revolutionary fraternity involves denying everything that legitimately separates or distinguishes men: borders between nations and religions, political and philosophical currents, and so on.

In a separated brother, a true Catholic sees the brother as much as the separation. However, a Catholic influenced by the spirit of fraternity *à la* 1789 sees only the brother and refuses to see the separation. Hence, a series of inter-confessional attitudes and tendencies popped up in certain circles of Catholic Action. It was not simply a question of promoting a courteous clarification with separated Christians, in cases in which prudence and zeal would recommend it, but of engaging in a policy of silence and even concessions which in the final analysis served only to confuse and scandalize, rather than clarify and convert.

In the specific area of Catholic Action, these principles gave rise to the so-called “common ground tactic” and apostolate “of infiltration,” which Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira thoroughly analyzes and debunks in his book.

In the important area of social action, in which a clearly and specifically Catholic apostolate had been attaining so many fruits, a spirit of fraternity with revolutionary overtones also influenced many people in favor of non-confessional workers’ associations. This is another point which the book covers in detail.

## Repercussion of the Novel Doctrines

At this point I look with great nostalgia to the peaceful and glorious times, filled with combative action but also with noble serenity, that preceded the painful shocks of which I now give a brief historical overview. In Rio de Janeiro, in a total unity of thought and action, elite priests and laity rallied around the lively and dynamic Cardinal Sebastião Leme; in São Paulo, they flocked around the venerable Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva. Cooperation was absolute. Mutual

understanding was profound. The celebrated Father Garrigou-Lagrange, who visited Brazil in 1937, told me this was the note that most impressed him in the religious life of the country.

But, along with so many good things coming to us from Europe, the seeds of the spirit of 1789, contained in certain books on the Sacred Liturgy, Catholic Action and social action, also arrived. A quiet but steady fermentation became widespread. As we have just recalled, excellent practices of piety were now criticized as obsolete. Communion outside the Mass or *extra Missam* was branded as gravely incorrect from a doctrinal point of view. Goffiné, a famous prayer book laden with blessings and ecclesiastical approvals, was chided as the very symbol of an era marred by sentimentalism, individualism and theological ignorance, all of which had to be overcome. Marian Congregations, Sodalties and other associations were labeled as anachronistic forms of organized apostolate destined for a quick extinction, to the benefit of Catholic Action, the only one worthy to survive.

Naturally, these ideas caused reactions. But most of the time, such reactions were sporadic and fleeting. The good-natured Brazilian mindset, so confident, peaceful and inclined to accept what comes from certain European nations like France, Germany or Belgium, is averse to the kind of reaction that the circumstances required. This made it necessary to put together a list of the doctrinal errors being spread, uncover the connection that united them, expose the ideological substratum common to them all, refute each error in such a way as to delve into its poisoned roots, and thus alert souls to that insidious attack.

It was known in well-informed circles that the Apostolic Nuncio, Dom Bento Aloisi Masella, and several prelates, were concerned about the situation, but that in their wisdom they did not believe the moment for an official intervention by church authority had arrived. Then I learned that Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira was weighing in his own mind whether the best thing would be for a layman to assume the role of lightning rod; and whether a book dedicated to an organized exposition and refutation of those errors would become a bombshell capable of alerting well-intentioned but incautious minds. That could at least restrain the expansion of evil, if not completely block it, as people whose minds were already prepared to accept error could not be prevented from doing so.

So it was that, honored with a preface by the Pope's Ambassador and an imprimatur given *ex commissione* by Archbishop José Gaspar D'Afonseca e Silva, out came the book.

## **A Bombshell and Its Wake**

I have already spoken about the explosion that *In Defense of Catholic Action* caused. Poor little book, everything has been said about it. At one point it was said to be unprofessional: a work that required knowledge of Theology and Canon Law, yet was written by a layman. Then, of course, a layman could never have been able to write such book! And the rumors honorably attributed its authorship, first to Msgr. Antonio de Castro Mayer, and then to Father Geraldo de Proença Sigaud. A very great honor indeed, but one at variance with historical truth, as Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira himself dictated the book in the course of a month of work, in the city of Santos, to the then young Archdiocesan Secretary of São Paulo's Catholic Student Youth (JEC), José Carlos Castilho de Andrade.

Did the book attain its intended result? Yes, thanks be to God! It mobilized a brilliant and prestigious elite of intellectual fighters around the principles of *In Defense of Catholic Action*. Perhaps even more importantly, its success can be gauged by the attitude of an enormous number

of readers... who did not like the book. They found it too categorical and inopportune. They did not disagree with its doctrines but saw the evil against which it was written as nonexistent or insignificant. Yet, after reading the book, they woke up and kept their distance from the innovators and innovations. From that moment on, progressivist errors continued to advance, but unmasked, and conquering only those who liked their true face.

As is well-known, having achieved this result, the author of *In Defense of Catholic Action* withdrew into silence, simply recording testimonies of support in the pages of *Legionário* and bearing relentless attacks with patient silence.

The sad history of these latest events was not short. But, for the author, it was studded with great reasons for joy.

Indeed, a series of papal documents now began to address those very errors hitherto called insignificant or even said to have been invented by the President of the Archdiocesan Board of Catholic Action in São Paulo. It was as if Pope Pius XII, by a strange and inexplicable coincidence, deemed the very same errors that Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira had denounced as a threat in Brazil, as actually existing in several countries.

*In Defense of Catholic Action* was published in June 1943. The Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* appeared on the 29th of the same month. The Encyclical *Mediator Dei* came to light in 1947, and the Apostolic Constitution *Bis Saeculari Die* was issued in 1948. Together, these three documents enunciated, refuted and condemned the main errors dealt with in the book.

Antero de Figueiredo, a great man of letters, also discussed identical errors in his Portuguese homeland in the beautiful romance, *Pessoas de Bem* [Upright People].

But, someone can ask, who knows whether the errors plaguing Europe really existed in Brazil? I ask: Has any error, regardless of its nature or importance, ever existed in Europe without immediately spreading to Brazil? At any rate, the Letter from the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries to the Venerable Brazilian Episcopate, dated March 7, 1950, clearly shows a special concern of the Holy See about similar errors in Brazil.

Finally, if *In Defense of Catholic Action* was based on a series of inventions, why would the letter written to the author on behalf of Pope Pius XII by the then Substitute Secretary of State, Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, affirm that much good could be augured from the circulation of the book?

But the existence of those errors in Brazil is also confirmed by testimonies of high-ranking Brazilian churchmen.

First of all, it is only just to recall the memorable name of Msgr. Sales Brazil, the victorious contender of secularist Monteiro Lobato. In his book, *The Great Accolades*, published in 1943, with his eyes obviously focused on the national scene, he deals with problems addressed by *In Defense of Catholic Action*. For his part, Father Teixeira-Leite Penido, a great theologian of international renown, in his 1944 book, *The Mystical Body*, also mentions and refutes some of the errors denounced by *In Defense of Catholic Action*.

Also of unparalleled value in this matter are documents issued by venerable figures of the National Episcopate. In August 1942, the Ecclesiastical Province of São Paulo issued a circular letter to the clergy warning them against liturgical abuse. The late Msgr. Rosalvo Costa Rego, Cathedral Vicar of Rio de Janeiro during the vacancy of Cardinal Sebastião Leme, published in May 1943 an Instruction on analogous errors. Years later, in 1953, a voice as powerful as the ones mentioned in the Apocalypse arose from the ranks of the Hierarchy. It was that of Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer. In his memorable *Pastoral Letter on Problems of the Modern Apostolate*, Bishop Mayer dealt against those die-hard errors a blow that left an indelible mark in history. The

illustrious prelate received numerous expressions of support from around the country, assembled by the publisher, Editora Boa Imprensa, in a precious little work titled *Repercussions*. But his *Pastoral Letter* was also published in Spain, France, Italy and Argentina and was praised by Catholic publications from almost all quarters. Its success was a proof that the danger which it sought to obviate was real and widespread.

In short, the existence and gravity of the problems discussed by *In Defense of Catholic Action* became crystal clear.

## A Lion with Three Paws

So, what was the end result of the book? Did it eliminate the errors against which it was written? Is it not true that the principles of the French Revolution have a growing influence even among Catholics and that many Catholic leaders show an increasing sympathy for socialism, and even communism?

From the standpoint of morality, is it not true that an ever greater permissiveness has made inroads into many Catholic circles?

So, someone could ask, to what avail was it to publish *In Defense of Catholic Action*? This would be tantamount to asking what good was it to publish all the ecclesiastical books and documents that I have just cited.

Actually, it did a world of good. We owe all those books and documents, the fact that, while such errors continue to exist, a large number of people see them with disgust and sorrow, and thus escape their destructive influence.

We also owe them the fact that, while error still continues to advance, it no longer does so in a triumphal or brazen fashion. Reaction against *In Defense of Catholic Action*, was first an uproar and then silence. When *Bis Saeculari Die* arrived in Brazil, there was also some uproar but mostly silence. And a few years later, the reaction against Bishop Mayer's Pastoral Letter was one of silence without uproar. In short, an error that loses its dynamism is like a lame, three-pawed lion—not a negligible result, come to think of it.

At a time when error advanced at a quick and triumphant pace, the specific task of *In Defense of Catholic Action* was to sound an alert that resonated throughout Brazil, closed doors to it in many circles around the country, and definitively paved the way for an easier comprehension of the documents of the ecclesiastical Magisterium already in existence or yet to come.

## Why Recount History?

Why all this narration? I answer this question with another: Why recount history? And if you are going to do it, why not tell, at the end of twenty years, some fragments of historical truth which—particularly when full and complete—can only benefit the Church?

Everyone knows that many Catholics were fearful at the gesture of Leo XIII opening the Vatican Archives to scholars. But the immortal Pontiff replied by saying that the true Church cannot fear true history.

On closing these lines, I turn to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Aparecida, Queen and Patroness of Brazil, to thank Her for all the good that Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira's book has done. May She unite everyone in truth and charity, for the good of Holy Mother Church and the Christian grandeur of Brazil.

Eloi de Magalhães Taveiro





## Preface

A modern writer defined Catholic Action as "*a kind of popular university in which one learns to love and promote love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Pope, and the Church.*"

The definition is both suggestive and successful, because it focuses, in a few words, on the main point of Catholic Action.

If on one hand we esteem and love Catholic Action because of the good it has already accomplished, we esteem and love it much more because it has come from the Pope's heart and because it continues to belong entirely to him.

To those who wish to know why Catholic Action, like the mustard seed of the Gospel parable, has spread its leafy branches over every field of the Church in a few years, causing a marvelous blossoming of hearts and souls, we can give this clear and precise answer: The secret of Catholic Action is an "*ardent love for the Holy Pontiff and a union with him through the hierarchy.*"

It is proper then, and even necessary, that everyone remember that the kingdom of Christ cannot be separated from the Pope and the hierarchy. By ourselves we are nothing and nothing can we achieve, but in union with the Pope we are everything and can achieve everything, for then we have Jesus Christ. We reach out with the indispensable means of prayer, action, and sacrifice, and Christ saves the souls.

We rejoice, therefore, when we see that interest in Catholic Action increases daily in Brazil, as can be ascertained by the growing number of books, magazines, and studies dedicated to this subject. It is a reality that fills our heart with burgeoning hopes, and most especially so when these writings heedfully expound, inculcate, and deepen the genuine and traditional principles of Catholic Action contained in the precious mine of the papal documents, precisely as Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, the esteemed President of the Archdiocesan Board of Catholic Action of São Paulo, set out to do in the work titled *In Defense of Catholic Action*.

As it is always useful and profitable to study and meditate on such truths, we are certain that this book—written by a man who has always lived in Catholic Action and whose pen is entirely at the service of Holy Church—will do much good to souls and promote

the cause of Catholic Action in this blessed land of the Holy Cross.

Rio de Janeiro, March 25, 1943—Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady.

+ Benedict, Archbishop of Cesarea,  
Apostolic Nuncio

## Introduction

### **Historical Antecedents of the Ambience in which Catholic Action Emerged**

Attentively reading the papal documents published over the last two hundred years, one will notice their insistent reference—sometimes in language reminiscent of the prophets of old—to a catastrophic social collapse that would result in the disarticulation and destruction of all the values of our civilization.

#### **a) Disorganization of the Liberal States**

The French Revolution was the first confirmation of these previsions. It introduced in the political terrain a devouring and progressive agitation that shook the most solid institutions of that time and prevented their replacement by any others equally durable. The contagion of this political fire spread from the constitutional sphere to the economic and social fields, and audacious theories, promoted by worldwide organizations, completely undermined every feeling of security in a convulsed Europe. The clouds accumulating on the horizon were such that Pius XI said that it was already the time to ask if this universal affliction were not announcing the coming of the Son of Iniquity, prophesied for the last days of mankind:

*These things [contemporary misfortunes] in truth are so sad that you might say that such events foreshadow and portend the "beginning of sorrows," that is to say of those that shall be brought by the man of sin, "who is lifted up above all that is called God or is worshipped" (2 Thess. ii, 4).<sup>1</sup>*

*And thus, even against our will, the thought rises in the mind that now those days draw near of which Our Lord prophesied: "And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold" (Matt. 24:12).<sup>2</sup>*

#### **b) Universal Panic**

In fact, the worldwide conflict dissipated the last vestiges of optimism from the Victorian era and laid bare the hideous wounds

---

<sup>1</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, May 8, 1928, no. 15, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_08051928\\_miserentissimus-redemptor\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_08051928_miserentissimus-redemptor_en.html)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 17.

that covered contemporary civilization, like leprosy, from top to bottom. The souls deceived by the fallacious and brilliant appearance of the prewar society and still slumbering unconcernedly under their liberal illusions abruptly woke up, and the need for vast and drastic measures of salvation to prevent the imminent ruin became obvious to all.

### **c) Dictatorships**

Then the great leaders of human masses rose up and began to drag behind them the multitudes terrorized into a state of delirium, and to promise simple solutions through the most diverse legislative reforms.

### **d) The Supreme Catastrophe**

This was precisely the tragedy of the twentieth century. The Popes had proclaimed repeatedly that only a return to the Church would save mankind. However, the solution was sought outside the Church. Rather than promoting the reintegration of man into the Mystical Body of Christ and, implicitly, his moral regeneration, an attempt was made *"to defend the city without God's help,"* a vain effort whose failure dragged us to the mortal pangs of the present conflagration.<sup>3</sup> This frenetic, disorderly, hallucinating search for and acceptance of any solution, however harsh it might be, as long as it is not the solution that is Christ, was the last catastrophe in this chain of errors, which from link to link, led us from the first denials of Luther to the present bitterness. It will be difficult to predict the future, and such is not the aim of this book. Of the exposition made so far, let us keep only this notion: the anxious and hallucinating search for a radical and immediate solution was the great worry that, consciously or unconsciously, seized us all in the two most recent decades of this terrible twentieth century. Like shipwreck victims, men try to grasp even at straws floating on the waves, attributing saving qualities to them.

The delirium of shipwreck has effects on its victims beyond the illusion of being saved by holding onto straw. When proper means of rescue are offered, they hurl themselves madly upon them, use them poorly, at times destroy them through ineptitude, and finally sink amidst the debris of the boats that could have saved them.

## **Pius XI Finds Catholic Action**

---

<sup>3</sup> [Trans.: World War II.]

### **Hopes and Triumphs**

This, unfortunately, is what happened with Catholic Action, and in no small degree.

Endowed with a powerful mind and enlightened by the Holy Ghost, the immortal Pius XI beckoned to the world with the great remedy of Catholic Action and thus showed it the only means of salvation. How copious were the generous dedication and indomitable energies that the Pontiff's appeal was able to raise up! How many secure and lasting victories were won in areas where all circumstances seemed to presage a total collapse!

### **Exaggerations**

The certainty that Catholic Action offered a remedy for contemporary evils and the imminence and scope of the expectations that a universal triumph of Catholic Action seemed to raise provided reason enough for much of the enthusiasm—in days convulsed by the most profound moral commotion—to be manifested in a less balanced way than would have been desired. There arose Messianisms with a highly nervous pitch and a passion for absolute action and immediate results that banished common sense far from certain environments otherwise filled with a generous fervor for Catholic Action. It would be difficult to say how much the sowing of cockle by the *inimicus homo* contributed to deviate so many people inspired by the most praiseworthy intentions into the field of errors already condemned by the encyclical *Pascendi* and the encyclical against *Le Sillon*. The reality is that an unwholesome Messianism started to throw the fundamental principles of Catholic Action in certain souls into delirium. And since truths which throb in delirium are ready to transform themselves into errors, it was not long before many new concepts began to assume an audacious character and ended up becoming unquestionably erroneous.

### **Errors:**

#### **a) Regarding Spiritual Life**

Therefrom came a set of principles, or rather, tendencies, which diminish or extinguish the role of human cooperation in regard to piety, sacrificing it to a one-sided conception of the action of grace. Flight from occasions of sin, mortification of the senses, examinations of conscience, the Spiritual Exercises, all ceased to be properly understood. Because of a few real excesses in the use of these salutary methods, some concluded that it was necessary to relegate to oblivion or to openly fight that which the Church's

wisdom had so clearly praised. Even the Rosary had its detractors. To enumerate the consequences following upon so many errors would be a lengthy task.

#### **b) Regarding Apostolate**

Side by side with the theological consequences and inspired by the same errors, others appeared carrying with them a good portion of truths, even providential truths. Under the pretext of breaking with routine, they talked about "*apostolate of infiltration*." The necessity of this apostolate is urgent. Nevertheless, nothing warrants, in the name of this truth now in open delirium like the others, making a radical condemnation of all the open, bold, and undisguised methods of apostolate. It could be said that human respect, which leads one to be silent about or sweeten the truth and avoid any fight and any argument, has become the source of inspiration for a new apostolic strategy. And this strategy, according to the desires of certain circles, should be the only one to have an officially recognized status in Catholic Action. At the same time, a spirit of unlimited concessions in face of the outbreak of new fashions and customs began to take shape. This attitude further disguised itself in the cloak of a serious obligation to do apostolate in ambiances proscribed by moral theology for any Catholic unwilling to fall from the supernatural dignity granted him at Baptism.

#### **c) Regarding Discipline**

It must be said to the credit of our clergy that it was noted very early that the authority of the priest, if exercised freely in Catholic Action, would quickly check the circulation of so many errors. Hence there arose a series of prejudices, sophisms, and exaggerations whose systematic fruit is the elimination of priestly influence in Catholic Action. How many priestly hearts will bleed with painful memories while reading these lines! Our wise and devout clergy well deserved the honorable acknowledgement that error could only spread over the ruins of its authority and prestige.

#### **The Reason for This Book**

In view of all this, and while this sowing of errors has not found general acceptance in Catholic Action, this providential instrument Pius XI gave the Church would already risk being turned against its own ends if the action of (fortunately) small groups where error did find enthusiastic adepts were not courageously checked.

A superficial analysis of this situation would seem to indicate that it is not for laymen to initiate the refutation of such errors by means of a book especially dedicated to the subject. If, however, this is the first book on the subject, it is not the first refutation of rash doctrines about Catholic Action, nor the best among them. It seemed to us proper for the honor and defense of Catholic Action that a clear, filial and enthusiastic reaffirmation of the rights of the clergy and, implicitly, those of the hierarchy, come from a layman. Thus the eloquence of events will prove that Catholic Action is and wants to remain enthusiastically docile to authority; and that the doctrinal peculiarities we refute here will find both hierarchy and faithful united in the same repudiation, there being nothing more suitable for the requisites of the Church's decorum and Catholic Action's reputation.

As can be seen, this book was not written to be a treatise on Catholic Action, setting out to give a general and methodical idea of the subject. It is, rather, a work written to say what Catholic Action is not, what it should not be, and what it should not do. We willingly assumed this painstaking task, as the most unpleasant responsibilities are the ones that we should embrace with the greatest love in the Holy Church of God.

### **The Spirit in Which We Write It**

Why did we take on this onerous task? Among the multiple reasons is a hope to separate from error so much enthusiasm gone astray, so much wasted zeal, so much dedication that would give us the most ardent satisfaction were it only placed at the service of orthodoxy. Thus, it is with words of love that we bring this introduction to a close. Even if thistles tear our hands, even if we receive only ingratitude from those to whom we wish to extend the bread of good doctrine among the thorns of prejudice, we will feel amply rewarded for everything if the value of our sacrifice is used by Divine Providence to unite all souls in truth and in obedience: "*ut omnes unum sint.*"<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \*

An objection that could likely be leveled against this work is that the enemies of the Church may possibly exploit the doctrinal deviations of some members of Catholic Action.

---

<sup>4</sup> "That they all may be one" (John 17:21.)

His Excellency the Most Reverend José Gaspar D'Afonseca e Silva, Archbishop of São Paulo, once recounted to us a fact that resolves the difficulty with all clarity. The illustrious prelate told us of a most distinguished French priest who once wrote a newspaper article in which he exposed serious omissions in a Catholic work in his country. A journalist hostile to the Church rejoiced, singling this out as proof that "*Catholicism was dead.*" The priest eloquently replied that Catholicism would show weakness if it were to compromise with the errors that insinuate themselves into the ranks of the faithful; but, on the contrary, it manifests vitality when it eliminates the dregs and doctrinal impurities that attempt to intrude among them.

\* \* \*

### **Suave Truths, Austere Truths**

We would not want to close this introduction without a clarification of capital importance. The errors we fight in the present book are characterized, in their great majority, by one-sidedness. It pleases many to see only the sweet, suave, and consoling truths in the doctrine of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord's austere warnings, vigorous attitudes and sometimes terrible manifestations during His life are usually passed over in silence. Many souls would be scandalized—and that is the term—if they contemplated Our Lord wielding the whip to expel the vendors from the Temple, cursing deicidal Jerusalem, heaping recriminations upon Corozain and Bethsaida, stigmatizing the conduct and life of the Pharisees in phrases burning with indignation.

Nevertheless, Our Lord is always the same, always equally adorable, good, and, in a word, divine, both when He exclaims, "*suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God,*"<sup>5</sup> and when with a simple affirmation, "*I am He,*"<sup>6</sup> uttered to the soldiers about to arrest Him in the Garden of Olives, He shows Himself so awesome that all fall immediately to the ground: the voice of the Divine Master provoking not only in their souls but even in their bodies the same effect as the firing of some of the most terrible modern-day cannons. Some souls find delight—and how rightly so!—in contemplating Our Lord and the expression of adorable meekness in His Divine Face when He recommended to His disciples that they preserve in their souls the immaculate innocence of doves. They forget, however, that immediately afterwards Our Lord counseled

---

<sup>5</sup> Mark 10:14.

<sup>6</sup> John 18:5.



them to also cultivate the cunning of the serpent. Could the preaching of the Divine Master have had errors, omissions, or simply shadows?

### **Dangerous One-sidedness**

Who could admit this? Let us expel very far from us any and every form of one-sidedness. Let us see Our Lord Jesus Christ as the Holy Gospels describe Him to us, as the Catholic Church shows Him to us, that is to say, in the totality of His moral attributes, learning from Him not only meekness, prudence, patience, clemency, love of one's enemies, but also his occasionally terrible and frightening strength, courageous and heroic combativeness that extended as far as the Sacrifice of the Cross, and most holy astuteness that discerned from afar the machinations of the Pharisees and reduced their sophistic argumentations to dust.

This book was written precisely to restore—in the measure of its meager strength—the broken equilibrium in certain souls in regard to this most complex subject. However, before taking a stand for the austere truths, for the energetic and severe methods of apostolate so often preached by the word and example of Our Lord, and before claiming for them the place they merit in the admiration and piety of the faithful, we take pride in affirming clearly that one could say regarding the gentle and sweet truths of the Holy Gospels what Saint Thomas Aquinas said of the Blessed Sacrament: We should praise them as much as we can and dare, because they will never be praised enough.

### **Character of This Work**

Let no trace of one-sidedness be seen in our thought or language. God forbid! Written to fight one-sidedness, this book would not want to fall in the opposite extreme. However, as neither space nor time allows us to write a work on the love and severity of Our Lord; as, on the other hand, the suave and consoling truths are already very well-known, we have taken upon ourselves only the more unpleasant but urgent task of writing about that which human frailty more easily leads the masses to ignore.

It is as a consequence of this set of ideas, and this set alone, that we concern ourselves exclusively with the errors that we have before us and do not attempt to defend those "suave" truths which the followers of these errors accept...and exaggerate: It is superfluous to fight for undisputed truths.



# **Part I**

# **Juridical Character of Catholic Action**



## Chapter 1

### Doctrine on Catholic Action And the Mandate of the Hierarchy

#### The Origin of Catholic Action's Present Organizations

The first matter we should examine is the juridical character of Catholic Action.

Before the pontificate of Pius XI, the expression "*Catholic action*" was used to designate the lay apostolate in general and all efforts developed in this field for the re-Christianization of the individual, the family, and society. Thus, all the organizations dedicated to this task could legitimately call themselves works of Catholic action. During the pontificate of Pius XI, organizations with the special purpose of systematically promoting and organizing the lay apostolate were instituted and the Holy See gave these new organizations the name Catholic Action.

Consequently, a great number of scholarly authors began to draw a distinction between the new organizations called "*Catholic Action*"—the only ones with the right to use this noble title with capital letters—and "*Catholic action*," the general designation for activities of the lay apostolate that preceded the foundation of Catholic Action and for the apostolic organizations that came afterwards but remained outside its fundamental structure.

#### Juridical Character of Catholic Action: the Mandate of Catholic Action

What is the juridical character<sup>1</sup> of the Catholic Action organizations?

It is usually affirmed that upon creating these new and important organizations of lay apostolate and convoking all the faithful to join them, Pius XI formulated an unmistakable and solemn mandate that bestowed on the laity enrolled in Catholic Action a new position within the Church.

#### Notions about the Mandate

Let us explain this doctrine better. As we know, Our Lord Jesus Christ ordered Peter and the other Apostles to continue His work

---

<sup>1</sup> Whenever we use the expression "juridical character," we do so in the sense of "formal constitutive."

of preaching the Good News to all peoples, introducing them, by Baptism, into the life of grace, and governing them in this life until they attained eternal blessedness. The imperative expression of the will of the Divine Master—which constitutes a command, in Latin *mandatum*—entailed for the Twelve and their successors an obligation, a responsibility, a task and, at the same time, a power.

Indeed, obliged by the Divine Master to preach the Truth, administer the sacraments, and govern souls, everything they were to do in carrying out this task they would do by virtue of the Redeemer's will, which made them His authentic representatives and ambassadors, envoys invested with all the authority that Our Lord Himself rightfully and properly had to carry out His earthly mission. Thus, this "*commandment*" to carry out the apostolate is properly an imperative procuration that makes the Apostles true "*mandataries*."

### **Ecclesiastical and Civil Meaning of "Mandate"**

We insist, however, on a noteworthy difference: While the procurations currently used in civil life are freely exercised by the mandatary, who can resign at any moment, the mandate given to Saint Peter and the Apostles was imperative and imposed a double obligation, that is, first to accept the procuration and then to exercise it according to the will of the Divine Commander. The powers received by Saint Peter and the Apostles were transmitted to the Supreme Pontiff and the ecclesiastical hierarchy from century to century and make the Church's present rulers legitimate successors of the Twelve.

### **Hierarchical Character of Catholic Action Deduced from the Mandate**

Having outlined these preliminary notions, we now turn our eyes to the history of the great and luminous pontificate of Pius XI. Many authors of works on Catholic Action emphasize that the pressing circumstances in which the Church then found herself—and which unfortunately are far from being over—led the Pontiff to:

1. order all laymen to engage in the work of the apostolate;
2. found an organization within whose framework and under whose internal hierarchy all of this work was to be done;
3. and, implicitly, give this organization the same obligation, impose on it the same task, charge, or responsibility imposed on each of its members.

Between these facts and the mandate given by Our Lord Jesus Christ to the hierarchy, two points of contact were noted:

1. **of analogy:** The situations were similar, because the hierarchy had proceeded in regard to Catholic Action in a way that evidently called to mind Our Lord's attitude when He invested the Twelve with authority;

2. **of participation:** The hierarchy transmitted powers to Catholic Action. What powers? Obviously, none originating from any other source than the powers the hierarchy itself had received. The powers or functions transmitted would be, therefore, of a hierarchical nature so that they "**participated in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church,**" according to the definition of Pius XI.

### **Concrete Consequences:**

We ask our readers' forgiveness for the monotony of these enumerations, but there is no better process for shedding as much light as possible on subjects that are inherently subtle and complex and that easily induce confusion in minds. We will now enumerate, therefore, the practical consequences that would result from everything that has been described:

#### **a) Regarding Other Lay Organizations**

1. When creating a **special** organization for the exercise of this mandate, Pius XI made very clear that this mandate did not affect preexisting apostolic associations, but only the juridical structure of Catholic Action.

2. This being so, only by enrolling in this entity and acting in union with it do the faithful execute the task spoken of by the Pontiff, and only a member of Catholic Action, therefore, has a mandate.

3. No association apart from the so-called fundamental organizations of Catholic Action has, therefore, a mandate, nor do any of the members of such associations who have not personally enrolled in one of the aforesaid fundamental organizations.

4. It would follow from the mandate granted to the fundamental organizations of Catholic Action that all the other preexisting associations, as long as they work towards any of the ends of Catholic Action, would be surviving on ground granted to the latter, which is tantamount to affirming that they should disappear.

5. And since the Holy See wished to proceed in a fatherly manner, by not applying the death penalty to formerly well-deserving entities, it has suggested, while at the same time occasionally praising them, that their era is over, thus indicating to zealous and intelligent laymen—for whom "*a word to*

*the wise is sufficient*"—that they avoid joining and working in such associations, now already in a pre-cadaverous state.

6. Some concede that associations with a strictly religious character could survive since, as they say, Catholic Action does not concern itself with piety; others understand that Catholic Action suffices for everything, and that even these associations are entirely superfluous and should vanish: if "***non sunt multiplicanda entia sine necessitate***,"<sup>2</sup> their *raison d'être* has ceased.

7. Both currents believe, nevertheless, that apostolate should be done only by Catholic Action, and that until such other associations of apostolate expire they should carry out modest, subdued, and inexpressive activities, as only these are compatible with the process of one who is slipping toward the grave.

8. Some do not go that far, believing that the associations predating the present juridical structures of Catholic Action should neither disappear nor abandon the apostolate, but rather occupy with their deeds and works an entirely secondary position: since they are not exercising a "*mandated*" apostolate, they should harvest only the rare shafts of wheat that the sickles of the accredited harvesters, burdened with an excessive workload, leave behind on the Father's field.

#### **b) Regarding the Hierarchy**

These are the concrete consequences which, in regard to the relations between Catholic Action and other Catholic associations, logically or illogically result from the doctrines we have been describing. However, their effects in the field of relationships between Catholic Action and the hierarchy are even more important:

1. Some believe that the word "***participation***" must be understood in its most exact and strict meaning and that the mandate granted by the Holy Father Pius XI incorporated the members of Catholic Action into the hierarchy of the Church.

2. Others understand that the members of Catholic Action do not participate in the hierarchy but in the apostolate of the hierarchy; in other words, that while not belonging to the hierarchy they exercise functions of a hierarchical character as, for example, a priest who receives the power to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation exercises episcopal functions without, however, being a bishop.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Do not multiply entities when not necessary."



3. Many commentators have based themselves on one or both of these opinions to maintain that Catholic Action was invested with such authority, that the laymen affiliated with it are dependent directly on the bishops, from whom they received a mandate, and not in any way on the parish priests or ecclesiastical assistants, who have no power to confer hierarchical office. There were some in Italy who maintained that since the mandate had been granted by the Supreme Pontiff, the members of Catholic Action should be subject to him alone and not to the Episcopate and should receive their orders from the Central Roman Board, which functions under the immediate authority of the Holy Father.

We insist further on two other important consequences that are usually drawn from this:

**c) Regarding the Organization and Methods of Apostolate of Catholic Action**

1. The mandate imparts to the apostolate of Catholic Action an irresistible fecundity, not in the figurative and literary sense of the word but in its proper and etymological sense.

2. Thus endowed with invincible resources for the sanctification of its own members, as well as for the attraction of the faithful foreign to it or even of infidels, Catholic Action should have methods of internal organization and exterior apostolate entirely different from everything that has been practiced until now.

Leaving for later chapters these two latter topics and the problem of relationships between Catholic Action and other organizations, let us address the juridical essence of Catholic Action and its relationship with the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

**Important Observations**

We would not like to close this chapter however, without emphasizing that it is extremely difficult to outline the existing errors regarding Catholic Action. As they are often the fruit of passions, now more, now less lively, there are a large number of intermediary positions that can be taken. For this reason, we attempt to point out, as completely as possible, only the most characteristic positions so that once these are refuted the intermediary ones crumble of their own accord.

## Chapter 2

### Refutation of the Erroneous Doctrines

As can be seen, the study of the exact juridical character of the organization founded by Pius XI assumes capital importance. Before treating the matter, it is helpful to list some general principles concerning the fact itself.

#### Development of Some Notions Given in the Preceding Chapter

As we have said, the word *mandatum* in Latin has the special meaning of an order or imperative act by a person invested with authority, over his subjects. Thus, this word would be equivalent to the English "*commandment*" with which we designate the laws of God and of the Church as an expression of the imperative force they exercise over us. It is in this sense that Our Lord imposed a mandate on the Apostles when He ordered them to preach the Gospel to all peoples of the earth. In this sense—the only one accepted in ecclesiastical language regarding the present subject—the procurations that Brazilian civil law calls mandates and that the mandatary may accept or reject are not true mandates.

The authors of works on Catholic Action whose opinions we refute understand that Pius XI imposed a mandate on the laity when he encouraged them to enroll in Catholic Action, which is tantamount to affirming that the fundamental organizations of Catholic Action have a mandate of their own. Regarding other apostolate organizations, since they do not proceed from an initiative of the Church but from a purely individual one; since they did not receive a responsibility with an order to carry it out but have only a permission to act; and, finally, since they consequently do not have the authority of the Church herself to carry out their goals and develop their activities under a mere "*laissez-faire*," a "*laissez-passer*," such organizations find themselves in a radically inferior situation, at an entirely different level, separated from Catholic Action by the immense distance that essentially separates the action of subjects from the official action of authority.

#### Philosophical Inconsistency of the Doctrines Described in the Preceding Chapter

Before going into the analysis of the historical fact and verifying whether Pius XI really granted such a mandate to Catholic Action, let us examine this doctrine itself in order to show its complete lack of foundation.

To avoid being strictly theoretical, let us imagine a concrete case.

### **Of the Various Kinds of Collaboration**

A man owns a field too large to be productive without the help of co-workers. He will be able to remedy this *insufficiency* by the following means:

1. imposing on some of his sons, by virtue of his paternal authority, the task of cultivating the field;
2. recommending that his sons do so, and approving the work they carry out;
3. not taking any initiative in the matter, but giving his consent to a spontaneous initiative of his sons;
4. giving his approval *a posteriori* to the fact that his sons, correctly supposing that such was their father's will, prepared for him the pleasant surprise of seeing the work done.

### **All Have the Same Essence**

Note that from the moral and legal point of view, these hypotheses differ from one another only in the greater or lesser intensity of the owner's act of will. This act of will is equally the source of licitness for each of them. Besides, morality distinguishes, with all propriety, various kinds of voluntary acts. In addition to the voluntary act "*in se*," which is the act simply and actually voluntary, performed "*scienter et volenter*,"<sup>1</sup> there exist also, among others, the virtual and the interpretative voluntary acts. The virtual voluntary act is that which proceeds from a purposely determined will, not withdrawn in its determination albeit not actually turned toward it, so that such determination is not considered by the subject. In the interpretative voluntary act, there neither is nor was any determination of the will, but given the moral dispositions of the subject, there certainly would have been had he been aware of certain events and factual circumstances.

### **And Produce Analogous Consequences**

---

<sup>1</sup> "Knowing and willingly."

All these acts are voluntary, so much so that they can be a cause of merit or demerit,<sup>2</sup> and they bestow the same essential prerogatives on all their agents:

1. The right to carry out an activity in the field to the degree that the task demands it, and by virtue of an expressed or legitimately presumed delegation from the field's owner, either imperatively or simply recommended.

2. From this follows the right, again a consequence of the owner's will, to put an end to any disturbances that third parties may raise against the exercise of this legitimate activity.

Be it for the first or for the second of these effects, we call the reader's attention to a fact of capital importance: Not only the imperative order of the field's owner, but also any form of work performed with his express or simply presumed approval confers or entails these moral and legal consequences.

The first would be in obedience to a "*mandate*," the others would be collaboration. In any case, however, be it in relation to the owner or in relation to third parties, both mandataries and collaborators would be equally legitimate channels of the owner's will and his legitimate representatives.

### **Distinction between Mandate and Collaboration**

Having reached this far in the exposition, it is fitting to clarify the relationship between the concepts of mandatary and collaborator. As we have seen, there is no mandatary who is not also a collaborator, in the etymological sense of the word, since his function is precisely the execution of the mandator's task with whom and in whose name he works.

Is any collaborator a mandatary?

If we take the term *mandatum* in the strict meaning expounded above, which is the only one admissible in ecclesiastical terminology, the answer is no. But the difference between the various types of collaborators, of which the mandatary is only a species, lies only in that the more categorical the owner's delegation, the more illicit will be any opposition to the will or activity of the delegate. In this matter there is only a simple difference of intensity and nothing else, a difference that does not alter the issue qualitatively.

Let us summarize. Every collaborator or mandatary can be considered a **separate member** of the principal, or mandator, as an executor of his will. In the various hypotheses we are always in

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rev. Fr. Victor Cathrein, S.J., *Philosophia Moralis*, (Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1945) pp. 52-54.

the presence of **separate members** of the mandator, whose only diversity of conditions in regard to the latter are the various graduations of the will that they obey. But the nature of the moral and legal ties that bind them to the mandator is always the same. Every mandatary is a collaborator. Every collaborator is in some way, a delegate of the mandator in regard to third parties.

### **Mandate and Delegation**

In this regard, it is well to emphasize with even greater clarity the distinction between the *mandatum*, in the imperative sense of the word, and the mandate in the civil sense of the word, that is, as "*power of attorney*."

There is power of attorney, or delegation of function, whenever one person makes another responsible for a certain task.

In the terminology of positive civil law, a distinction is made between the mandate of paid services and that of gratuitous collaboration. Nevertheless, in the field of natural law, essentially all collaboration by consent, even though only presumed, is a delegation.

Indeed, collaboration is the insertion of one person's activity into that of someone else. Now, since each person is the owner of his own activity, collaboration is licit only when it is authorized, even if only presumably. In this sense, in regard to third parties, the collaborator is a representative of the will of the person for whom he works. All licit collaboration implies, therefore, a delegation.

### **Summary of the Notions Given in this Chapter Thus Far**

Because of the subject's extreme complexity, we once again summarize what has been said:

a) Every activity exercised in someone else's task is collaboration. In this sense, collaborators are those who act by someone's order, recommendation, or merely through his presumed consent;

b) Since the legal character of these relations is the same in any of the hypotheses, the variants resulting from the latter constitute diverse types within a common species, and the diversities existing among these types do not create essential differences;

c) As authentic collaborators, all can call themselves, in the broadest sense of the word, delegates of the mandator;

d) The various kinds of collaboration consequently imply in the concrete order that, as the mandator's will is the source of the

right, any opposition to his collaborator's activity will be more illicit to the degree that the mandator's will is more positive, grave, and energetic.

In view of all this, the conclusion we reach is of a crystalline evidence: a priori, and without delving into the evaluation of the historical fact of the mandate that Pius XI is said to have given Catholic Action, we can affirm that such mandate, of itself, would be radically ineffective to produce a substantial and essential alteration in the very juridical character of the lay apostolate entrusted to Catholic Action.

### **Mandate and Collaboration in Regard to the Lay Apostolate**

Let us apply more concretely the general principles just presented, abandoning the example of the father with a field to be cultivated and directly examining the relationships between the hierarchy and the works of lay apostolate.

The personal and direct efforts of the members of the hierarchy being insufficient for the full realization of the task imposed on them by the Divine Founder, they have recourse to the aid of the laity and, precisely like the field's owner, they may assume for this purpose one of the following positions:

a) oblige the laity to carry out the apostolate as is said to have happened in the case of Catholic Action;

b) recommend to the laity that they undertake a certain task, as is the case with numerous associations that are approved and vividly encouraged by the hierarchy in their activities;

c) approve initiatives or works that private individuals spontaneously organize and submit to their prior approval;

d) grant a general approval to all merely individual initiatives or work by any of the faithful with the intention of doing apostolate.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>In order to avoid any confusion, we want to include in the general order of ideas being expounded here a well-known classification which is, furthermore, one of evident intrinsic worth: official and private apostolate activity. The scope of each of these terms—official and private—is usually seen in an excessive way. The Church is a society endowed with its own government, She acts officially by means of this government, so the personal activities of Her members could not in any way affect the whole collectivity. Herein lies the distinction between "official" and "private" in the Church, as in any other society. It would be patently wrong, however, to presume that private activities have no manner of impact, bearing or effect on society and that they are merely "private" in the fullest sense of the word, proceeding exclusively from the individual who is solely responsible for them. Let us imagine a concrete example. A society founded to initiate and coordinate studies on an unexplored historical problem only manifests itself in an official capacity through its board of directors or trustees. Nevertheless, all the studies carried out by the society's members as a result of the impetus and means provided by the society for the realization of the research and with the intention of attaining the society's goals, are acts that flow from the society and are to be credited to it. The society can sustain,

### **The Mandate Is Not Sufficient to Give Catholic Action a Juridical Essence Different from That of Other Lay Organizations**

The first case is the only one in which a mandate could be recognized. In the other cases, there would be no mandate. Mandataries or not, all would be true collaborators of the hierarchy and would have in face of it essentially the same juridical status.

### **The Mandate Is Merely a Way of Granting Powers. It Has Nothing to Do with the Nature and Scope of the Powers Granted**

In this regard, we must emphasize that it is erroneous to presume that the mandate—to which they attribute such a marvelous effect (which we have shown it does not have)—derives from the fact that the Holy Father made it obligatory for all the laity to enroll in the ranks of Catholic Action. We shall now show that it is not necessary to admit this obligation of enrollment for all the faithful to sustain that Catholic Action has a mandate.

A simple comparison will demonstrate this better than any doctrinal digression. When the State convokes its citizens to a general mobilization, together with the *mandatum* to join the

---

therefore, and it would be right in doing so, that the studies carried out privately by its members within the scope of its purposes, are studies carried out by the society itself.

The same happens with Holy Church. While having its own authority, the only one that can act in an official manner, it would be wrong to presume that the acts of apostolate recommended or permitted explicitly or tacitly by the Church, or even merely approved "a posteriori" are purely individual acts and that the merit due for them should be credited exclusively to the individual. It was Holy Mother Church that made the individual capable of understanding the supernatural nobility of doing apostolate; it was the Church that provided him the grace without which there is no true desire for apostolate; it was in conformity with the Church's desires that he acted. Moreover, it was in his capacity as a member of the Church that he acted. How can one maintain, then, that the individual action of apostolate we call "private" does not in any way involve Holy Church? This would make it necessary to change the language of all or almost all treatises on Church history that credit her with the merit—and how rightly so!—for all noble deeds the faithful have performed throughout history.

What are, then, the precise limits of the distinction between official and private apostolate? It remains immense.

Official apostolate is directed by ecclesiastical authority. It is immediately responsible, therefore, for everything that is done in official tasks. Indeed, ecclesiastical authority has a moral responsibility for everything it ordains. In the works of apostolate that are simply permitted or recommended, whenever the direction of the executive aspects is not carried out by ecclesiastical authority itself, it will receive the merit for everything that is done which is good—this was the only thing it permitted—and the individuals will bear the blame for everything that is done wrong or that is evil—this being contained neither in the intentions nor permission of ecclesiastical authority. The Church, for example, desires and permits that we give good counsel to our neighbor. Whenever we do so, part of the merit for our action belongs to authority. If, however, we do so badly, basing ourselves on doctrines corroded by error, or lacking the necessary charity and prudence, authority has no blame in this, for the blame lies entirely with us.

ranks, it gives them responsibilities characteristic of the State. The same responsibilities may, nevertheless, be granted to volunteers, whose enlistment in the army resulted not from a commanded act but from a free act. The *mandatum*, as can be seen, is not a necessary element for the granting of an official responsibility.

For this reason the powers of a bishop are just as real when he accepts his office in virtue of an imposition from authority as when the office derives from a simple recommendation, or even when he obtains it after having sought it for himself.

Thus, whether or not one admits the laity's obligation to enroll in Catholic Action, no essential consequence results in regard to the powers it possesses. Even if enrollment is optional, the mandate would fall fully over Catholic Action as a collective organism on which the Holy See imperatively imposed a certain task. All those who enroll in Catholic Action, even if by their own free will, would become participants in its mandate.

In other words, it is not on this point that an essential difference between Catholic Action and other lay organizations can be found.

### **There Are Other Works Endowed with a Mandate which Have Never Been Attributed a Juridical Essence Different from That of Other Works of Lay Apostolate**

Here we can make some interesting considerations. If it is certain that Catholic Action has an obligation to do apostolate, imposed by the Holy Father, it is not certain that other works of lay apostolate preexisting and unrelated to the basic associations of Catholic Action do not have a mandate, that is, an absolute and definite obligation to perform a certain task of apostolate. It is not difficult to find works of lay apostolate established through the initiative of popes or bishops, and at times entrusted by them with most important charges that they could not fail to undertake under penalty of serious disobedience.

Many other works founded by private initiative, with simple ecclesiastical approval, later received orders from the hierarchy to perform certain tasks, tasks that frequently constituted the central and choicest part of more than one program of episcopal government. Never was it claimed, however, that such works, endowed with an evident and unquestionable mandate, placed their lay operators in an essentially different juridical situation.

There is more. After Catholic Action was organized among us, the Plenary Brazilian Council made the foundation of Confraternities of the Most Blessed Sacrament compulsory in all parishes,



imperatively charging them with the glorious task, among others, of seeing to the splendor of worship. It is a mandate. Who would dare affirm, however, that this altered the juridical character of these most ancient confraternities? Could there be a more conclusive proof that Catholic Action is not the sole possessor of a mandate and implicitly does not have a juridical nature essentially different from that of other associations?

As president of Catholic Action, the author of this book, although writing to defend Catholic Action against the supreme danger of usurping titles it does not have, could not fail to be extremely grateful for the outstanding prerogatives with which the Holy Church has honored Catholic Action. Thus, it would be absurd for us to purposely disparage or diminish anything that, on the contrary, we are obliged to defend. While denying Catholic Action a juridical nature it does not possess, we cannot fail to emphasize that the rights expressly granted to Catholic Action by the current Charter and Bylaws of Brazilian Catholic Action remain intact throughout our argumentation. These prerogatives, while elevating Catholic Action to the dignity of the highest body of lay apostolate, in no way remove from it the quality of being the hierarchy's subject. While curtailing the excesses of certain circles in Catholic Action, we neither combat nor wage war against it, something that would be on our part not only an indignity, but the most flagrant absurdity. Instead, we render it a service of supreme importance by seeking to prevent it from forsaking its glorious role of servant of the hierarchy and conspicuous sister of all other Catholic organizations to become a devouring cancer and a seed of disorder.

Having mentioned the Bylaws of Brazilian Catholic Action, we may close these considerations with one more reflection they suggest to us.

Once these statutes had been promulgated and the religious associations predating Catholic Action placed in the condition of auxiliary entities, it is admitted as unquestionable that they have the obligation to help the different fundamental sectors of Catholic Action in the measure and ways that their own rules or bylaws permit. Now then, who imposed this obligation of helping in the apostolate? The hierarchy. And what is an obligation imposed by the hierarchy, but a mandate?

Summarizing these considerations, we should conclude that Catholic Action has in fact a mandate imposed by the hierarchy, but that this mandate does not alter its juridical essence, which is identical to that of many other works of lay apostolate, prior to or subsequent to the constitution of the present juridical structure of Catholic Action. Just as no one ever claimed that the

aforementioned works had a juridical essence fundamentally different from that of other works of the laity, so also there is no reason to make such a claim on behalf of Catholic Action.

### **Some Faithful Are Also Endowed with Mandates, but That Does Not Change Their Status of Subjects in Holy Mother Church**

We will now add an observation. There are people who by virtue of a serious duty of justice or charity have the necessary obligation to perform certain acts of apostolate, this being an imperative of moral character, imposed by God Himself. Such, for example, is the case of parents in regard to their children, employers in regard to their employees, teachers in regard to their students, and so forth. Any member of the faithful, in certain circumstances, has the same grave duty in regard to another as, for example, in the case of someone giving assistance to a dying person. Now, all these obligations constitute true commandments and several organizations were founded to facilitate the performance of these tasks by the mandataries. Such are the associations of Christian parents, Christian teachers, and the like. This notwithstanding, neither these organizations nor mandataries ever found themselves, in regard to the hierarchy, in a situation not essentially identical to that of a layman. And yet, it is a true mandate. In this sense, the opinion of Father Liberatore is significant. In his treatise on **Ecclesiastical Public Law**, published in 1888, he refers literally to parents and teachers as mandataries of the hierarchy. The juridical nature of Catholic Action is not, therefore, any novelty in Holy Church.

### **Papal Documents**

Furthermore, this is precisely what the Holy Father Pius XI was saying when he insistently identified, on many occasions, the Catholic Action of his time with the uninterrupted lay apostolate that existed in the Church since its earliest days. He referred to the Catholic Action of the Apostolic times by the same name (and using the same capital letters) as the Catholic Action of our times. Let us listen to him addressing the female members of the Italian Catholic Youth Workers, on March 19, 1927:

*The first spread of Christianity in Rome itself happened through and because of Catholic Action. Could it have been done otherwise? What would the Twelve have done, lost in the immensity of the world, had they not gathered people about them....Saint Paul closes his Epistles with a list of names: a few priests, many seculars, some women: "Help those women who have labored with me*

*in the Gospel (Phil. 4:3). It is as if he had said: They belong to Catholic Action.*<sup>4</sup>

This excerpt shows us that from the outset of the Church's life the hierarchy began to convoke the faithful, just as Pius XI did, to the work of apostolate. As if to emphasize the complete, and by the way, glorious, identity between the Catholic Action of his day and that of the earliest times, Pius XI writes the words Catholic Action with capital letters in both references; and addressing the bishops and pilgrims of Yugoslavia on May 18, 1929, he adds:

*Catholic Action is not a novelty of the present times. The Apostles laid its foundations when, in their pilgrimages to spread the Gospel, they asked help from the laity—men and women, magistrates and soldiers, young, old, and adolescents, who had faithfully kept the word of life announced among them in God's name.*<sup>5</sup>

### **Summonses and Mandates Previous to the Creation of the Present Structure of Catholic Action**

As complete as the adaptability of Catholic Action's juridical structure and methods may be regarding the problems of our days, we do not see how, after these documents, it can be sustained that today's Catholic Action has received a mandate that would make it essentially different from the Catholic Action existing in the Church from Apostolic times to this day. Besides, it should be noted that during the twenty centuries of her existence, the Church has uninterruptedly repeated to the faithful this call to the apostolate, sometimes by means of encouragement, at other times by means of summonses; and these convocations, identical in everything to those made by the hierarchy in the first centuries, are likewise identical to those the hierarchy makes today. Indeed, what Church historian would dare affirm that there was a century, a year, a month, or a day on which the Church failed to request and use the laity's cooperation with the hierarchy? Not speaking of the Crusades, a characteristic type of militarized Catholic Action, most solemnly convoked by the Popes; not speaking of knighthood and the Orders of Chivalry, whose monk warriors the Church invested with most ample faculties and apostolic charges; not speaking of the countless faithful who, attracted by the Church to the associations of apostolate she founded, worked together with the hierarchy, let us examine other institutions where our argumentation becomes especially solid.

<sup>4</sup> Pius XI, Address to the Affiliated Workers of the Feminine Youth of Italian Catholic Action, Mar. 19, 1927, in Rev. Fr. Arturo Alonso, O.P., *Catholic Action and the Laity*, trans. Cornelius J. Crowley (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1961), pp. 104-105.

<sup>5</sup> Pius XI, Address to the Bishops and Pilgrims of Yugoslavia, May 18, 1929.

No one is unaware that there are in the Church several religious orders and congregations that admit only persons who have not received the priestly unction. Among these are, first of all, the feminine religious institutions as well as some masculine congregations such as the Marist Brothers. Secondly, there are the many men religious who are not priests but who are admitted into religious orders of priests as assistants. One could not deny without temerity that, in a general manner, the members of these orders or congregations have a vocation from the Holy Ghost. By affiliating them with their respective institutions, the Church officially charges them with the responsibility to do apostolate; in other words, it reinforces with stronger punishments the obligation that, as faithful, they already had for doing apostolate and makes the performance of certain acts of apostolate obligatory. All of this notwithstanding, there are some who believe that the mysterious and marvelous effect of Catholic Action's mandate places its members far above any religious who do not have Holy Orders. Why? By virtue of which sortilege? If these religious were never considered integral elements of the hierarchy, being mere subjects of the Church, why should it be otherwise when it comes to Catholic Action?

As can be seen, there is no reason to attribute to the convocation made by Pius XI, considered in itself, a scope greater than those made by his predecessors.

## **Conclusion**

It is certain that Pius XI made an especially serious convocation in view of the most pressing risks facing the Church and that he gave to such appeal a most general scope, including all the faithful in it in some way. Nevertheless, as we already said, all the faithful were convoked to the apostolate in other times as well. Pius XI himself says this in the aforementioned allocution to the bishops and faithful of Yugoslavia, when he recalls that in Rome, *"Peter and Paul requested this cooperation in their toils from all souls of good will."* While the seriousness of the risks was surely never as great as in our days, inasmuch as we were never before threatened with such a profound and general apostasy, it is no less certain that such risks were as imminent in other times as now. Hence, the juridical scope of the appeals made by the popes in those times could not have been smaller than that of nowadays.

Let us cite some papal documents calling the faithful to the apostolate and even ordering them to it:

Pius IX said that *"First of all, let them [the faithful] rescue them [the unfaithful] from the darkness of the errors into which*

they have unhappily fallen and strive to guide them back to Catholic truth."<sup>6</sup> And the Vatican Council gives this most solemn mandate to all the faithful:

And so in the performance of our supreme pastoral office, we **beseech** for the love of Jesus Christ and **we command, by the authority of him who is also our God and savior**, all faithful Christians, especially those in authority or who have the duty of teaching, that they contribute their zeal and labor to the warding off and elimination of these errors from the Church and to the spreading of the light of the pure faith.<sup>7</sup>

To this Leo XIII adds:

Another thing We wish all of you to do, but especially those of you who excel in learning, dignity, and authority, is that in both private and public life, you be solicitous for the good name of religion. Let the cause of the Church be more vigorously prosecuted under your leadership. Let all present and future institutions founded to promote the Catholic cause be willingly aided and increased.<sup>8</sup>

In the encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*, of January 10, 1890, the Holy Father adds:

Amid such reckless and widespread folly of opinion, it is, as We have said, the office of the Church to undertake the defense of truth and uproot errors from the mind, and this charge has to be at all times sacredly observed by her, seeing that the honor of God and the salvation of men are confided to her keeping. But, when necessity compels, not those only who are invested with power of rule are bound to safeguard the integrity of faith, but, as St. Thomas maintains: "Each one is under obligation to show forth his faith, either to instruct and encourage others of the faithful, or to repel the attacks of unbelievers."<sup>9</sup>

And in the same encyclical, the Holy Father recalls the above-mentioned text of the Vatican Council to add, "Let each one, therefore, bear in mind that he both can and should, so far as may be, preach the Catholic faith." Further, in the encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae* on Americanism, the Holy Father states that:

The scriptures teach us that it is the duty of all to be solicitous for the salvation of one's neighbor, according to the power and position of each. The faithful do this by religiously

<sup>6</sup> Pius IX, Encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*, Aug. 10, 1863, no. 9, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanto.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanto.htm)

<sup>7</sup> [Trans.: The author refers to the First Vatican Council.] First Vatican Council, Constitution *Dei Filius* at [www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V1.HTM#1](http://www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V1.HTM#1). (Our emphasis.)

<sup>8</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Quod Multum*, Aug. 22, 1886, no. 12, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_22081886\\_quod-multum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_22081886_quod-multum_en.html)

<sup>9</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*, Jan. 10, 1890, no. 14, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_10011890\\_sapientiae-christianae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_10011890_sapientiae-christianae_en.html)

*discharging the duties of their state of life, by the uprightness of their conduct, by their works of Christian charity and by earnest and continuous prayer to God.*<sup>10</sup>

In the encyclical *Graves de Communi Re*, of January 18, 1901, after recommending a centralized control for the efforts of all Catholics, the Holy Father adds:

*In Italy, We desire that this directive force should emanate from the Institute of Catholic Congresses and Reunions so often praised by Us, to which Our predecessor and We Ourselves have committed the charge of controlling the common action of Catholics under the authority and direction of the bishops of the country. So let it be for other nations, in case there be any leading organization of this description to which this matter has been legitimately entrusted.*<sup>11</sup>

Finally, in the encyclical *Etsi Nos*, of February 15, 1882, we find this energetic reflection:

*For the Church has not brought forth or educated her sons with this idea, that, when time and necessity compel, she should expect no assistance from them, but rather that they should all prefer the salvation of souls and the well-being of religion to their own ease and their own private interests.*<sup>12</sup>

To conclude these considerations, let us employ an analogy. Normally, all citizens have duties toward their country, among which is the duty of defending it if it is attacked. This duty, which precedes the promulgation of any state law, stems from morality. If, however, the state calls its citizens to arms, reminding them of their duty to defend their country, their obligation becomes even more serious. But it cannot be claimed that this call implies a mass promotion to the rank of officer. On the contrary, more than ever, this is the hour for great renunciations and unconditional discipline. On launching a general call, Pius XI made no promotions and promised no rewards. On the contrary, the gravity of the danger he denounced imperatively recommends discipline and renunciation while severely condemning pretenses to command and cravings of disorder.

---

<sup>10</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*, Jan. 22, 1899, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113teste.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113teste.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Graves de Communi Re*, Jan. 18, 1901, no. 23, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_18011901\\_graves-de-communi-re\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18011901_graves-de-communi-re_en.html)

<sup>12</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Etsi Nos*, Feb. 15, 1882, no. 17, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15021882\\_etsi-nos\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15021882_etsi-nos_en.html)

## **Chapter 3**

### **The True Nature of the Mandate of Catholic Action**

#### **There Is an Essential Difference between the Mandate Given to the Hierarchy by Our Lord and the Mandate Given by the Hierarchy to Catholic Action**

As we saw in the preceding chapters, the mandate received by Catholic Action does not give rise to any difference between its own juridical essence and that of other organizations of apostolate. At this point, a question could be asked: Is there, then, no difference between the indisputable mandate given by God to the hierarchy and the activities performed by the faithful?

#### **What This Difference Is Not**

Obviously, there is an immense difference between one thing and the other, but it would be a serious error to imagine that this difference stems entirely from the fact that the hierarchy received an imperative mission while the faithful have performed an action based mainly on recommendation. Indeed, if the imperative character were the distinctive note of the hierarchical apostolate, every apostolate exercised because of a mandate would be hierarchical. In this case, one could affirm that a nun acting by a mandate from her superior, obliged under holy obedience would be performing a hierarchical action. Now this does not happen, and no commentator on Canon Law would dare affirm it.

#### **Characteristics of the Mandate Received by the Hierarchy**

What differentiates the hierarchical mandate from other mandates is its immediate source and the nature and extension of the powers bestowed. We cannot omit the singular circumstance that the importance of this mandate lies also to a great degree in its exclusive character. The Divine Savior, wishing to extend the fruits of the Redemption to the whole human race, decided to deliver this responsibility to the Twelve and their successors. He did this in such a way that the task remained exclusively theirs, so that no one could call this task to himself or even collaborate in it without their consent or without dependence on or union with them.

As a result, the Sacred Hierarchy is the sole distributor of the fruits of Redemption, which are not to be found in any other church, sect, or school. On this truth is based the affirmation,

which we should revere and love with all the truthfulness of our faithful hearts, **that outside the Church there is no salvation.**

Upon this truth is also founded the principle that every apostolate activity exercised by the faithful is potentially placed under the full direction of the hierarchy, which can call to itself, to the extent that it sees fit, any or all of the governing powers, even to the last details of execution, of any private work of apostolate to which full autonomy had been given by means of a simple permission to act. It is not possible to conceive or admit in Holy Church a work founded on a supposed natural right of the faithful that would give them the most ample faculty to act in the field of apostolate at their pleasure, without the intervention of Holy Church, so long as they did not teach error or practice evil.

\* \* \*

### **In What Sense Can the Hierarchy Use Collaborators?**

By affirming that by Divine imposition this task belongs to the hierarchy and to it alone, we are making some statements that merit explicit reference:

1) With due reservation for the rights of God and considering merely the relationship between the hierarchy and third parties, this mission is the property of the hierarchy, which exercises over it the fullness of powers that an owner has over a possessed object.

2) Only the hierarchy has this property.

3) The word "*only*" is understood in the sense that the initiative and the realization of the task pertains to the hierarchy and to it alone, just as the initiative and the right of planting and making use of the field pertains only to the field's owner.

4) The expression "*only*" includes, however, in the concrete case of the hierarchy, another meaning, which is not necessarily inherent to the right of property: The rights of the hierarchy are so exclusively its own that they are inalienable. Now, this inalienability is not an attribute of the ordinary right of property.

5) Nevertheless, this "*only*" does not exclude the possibility of the hierarchy having recourse to elements foreign to it for the execution of part of its task, just as without alienation or renunciation of the right of property an owner can make use of



other people to cultivate his field. Likewise, an artist who assumes the responsibility of painting a certain work is still its creator even though he might use others for secondary tasks, such as the mixing of paints or even the painting of figures that are merely circumstantial and of no importance, reserving for himself the immediate direction of the whole work.

6) Thus, the difference between the hierarchical work and that of a person foreign to the hierarchy is solidified and defined with all clarity.

### **In What Sense Can Catholic Action Collaborate with the Hierarchy?**

Let us apply this notion to another sphere, and it will become clearer. A professor has, by right, the function of teaching in his classroom. However, for greater perfecting of his work, he may assign certain students to clarify the doubts of their classmates in study workshops, seminars, or even in public explanations given in the classroom. The situation of such students does not, because of this, cease to be substantially identical to that of the other classmates, whether in regard to them or to the professor.

1) The professor has the mastership, that is, the duty to define and promulgate the material, while the student tutor when teaching what he learned is a mere vehicle, albeit official, of another's teaching, regarding which he is himself a disciple.

2) Because of this, the tutor is in everything equal to his classmates, all being in a position of inferiority in relation to the professor.

3) While the authority of the professor is autonomous, the student tutor exercises his activities under another's direction.

### **Characteristics of the Mandate of the Laity**

It suffices to apply this example to the problem of the relationship between the hierarchy and the laity for the question to be clarified. Indeed, God gave the hierarchy a responsibility similar to that which parents give the professor; the hierarchy gives the laity a task similar to that which the professor gives the student tutor.

### **Are There In the Church Mandates Other Than Those Received by the Hierarchy?**

It is for the mandate bestowed by the Divine Redeemer, the most august and serious of mandates, that ecclesiastical terminology reserved par excellence the designation of **mandate**. In this most

special sense, only the hierarchy has a mandate. But, using the term in the etymological sense of an "*imperative order*," it is obvious that the hierarchy can also give mandates and that in certain specific cases God gives an order or mandate for apostolate directly to certain people. This is what we saw when mentioning the moral obligation, of which God is the Author and which makes certain acts of apostolate obligatory (for parents, teachers, employers, and so forth).

On the other hand, even though it is true that this direct mandate has God for its Author, it is to be exercised under the direction, authority, and care of the hierarchy. Thus to the question: "*does Catholic Action have a mandate*," we answer: 1) yes, if by mandate we understand an obligation of apostolate imposed by the hierarchy; 2) no, if by mandate we understand that Catholic Action is an element that in any way whatsoever forms part of the hierarchy and consequently shares in the mandate imposed directly and immediately by Our Lord on the hierarchy.

For a good comprehension of everything we have said on the problem of the "*mandate*," understanding the precise meaning of this term is of capital importance. Indeed, there are two fundamental distinctions that should be made.

## **The Great Hierarchical Mandate—The Various Mandates of the Subjects**

### **a) That in Which They Are Equal—First Distinction**

The word **mandate** has two meanings. One is the general meaning which indicates an imperative order of a legitimate authority to a subject. Another is the most restricted sense of the mandate that Our Lord gave to the hierarchy. As it is easy to see, there are a thousand possible mandates both in the civil and ecclesiastical orders. A master who imposes a task on his servant gives him a mandate or command. A Mother Superior who gives an order to a nun imposes on her a mandate or command. Our Lord also imposed a mandate or commandment on the hierarchy, that is, He gave them the obligation of exercising the powers He bestowed upon them.

A most important consideration enters here. The powers that Our Lord bestowed on the hierarchy constitute one thing and the "*commandment*," obligation, or "*mandate*" He imposed on them to exercise these powers is another. Since the very act of transmission of powers was imperative, one gives it the name of mandate. But the nature and scope of the powers, in themselves, have nothing to do with the imperative form of the duty to make

use of them. Thus, two mandates given by the same master to the same servant can bestow very different powers.

**b) In What They Are Different - Second Distinction**

The command imposed by Our Lord on the hierarchy is a command. The command imposed by the hierarchy on Catholic Action, and likewise on other organizations, is a command. But this does not allow us to conclude that the rights communicated in one case and the other are substantially identical.

The Church orders that members of Marian Congregations be governed by those congregations' presidents; that the Marian Federations exert certain general authority over the Marian Congregations, and so forth. But this imperative act, command, or mandate does not communicate to the Congregations' presidents or to others any power intrinsically participative in the hierarchical power of the Church.

Thus, to substantially confuse the Mandate par excellence, that of the hierarchy, with the other mandates existing in Holy Church is to positively practice the sophism called "*equivocation*," in which two different meanings are given to the same word and freely interchanged.

It is perhaps important to present a clarification also in regard to the powers of the presidents of Catholic Action, of Marian Congregations, and of others.

**The Leaders of Catholic Action Unquestionably Have a Certain Authority; But One Cannot Claim That Such Authority Has An Essence Identical to That of the Hierarchy**

Catholic Action has an effective authority over its members and, even more, over third parties, in regard to the accomplishment of its aims. It was entrusted by the hierarchy with a task of instrumental collaboration, so those who lead Catholic Action according to the intentions of the hierarchy do so by the hierarchy's authority. Neither the members of Catholic Action nor third parties can violate the authority of Catholic Action leaders without implicitly impugning the hierarchy's own. Does this mean that Catholic Action is incorporated to the hierarchy? No. It exercises a function of subject, precisely like the head of a group of workers, who directs the laborers in their activities on the master's property and must not be disturbed in the exercise of his authority by the workers or by third parties. This does not

mean that he shares in the right of property but that he acts by virtue of the owner's authority.

What is said of Catholic Action is said also regarding the leaders of any other endeavor established by the Church, such as the "*Work for the Preservation of the Faith*" ordered by Leo XIII.

As we saw, a transgression of the powers of the instrumental collaborator will be much more serious the more categorical and solemn is the expression of the owner's will. Thus, while transgression of the authority of someone acting by mere advice is less serious, it still is a transgression of authority. Therefore, no one, save a member of the hierarchy itself, can legitimately prevent a Congregation president from governing his sodality, exactly as happens within Catholic Action. Sodality members who revolt against him revolt *ipso facto* against the hierarchy. And third parties who raise obstacles to the legitimate activities of a Congregation, Third Order, and the like, rise up, in final analysis, against the hierarchy itself. The difference rests only in that the transgression will be less serious when the work of a religious association is simply recommended or permitted than when it is commanded.

### **General Summary of the Preceding Chapters**

Having in mind these complementary clarifications, we summarize in a few items all the conclusions of the last two chapters:

- 1) A mandate is every and any order legitimately imposed by a superior on a subject.
- 2) In this general sense, both the responsibility imposed by Our Lord on the hierarchy and that imposed by the hierarchy on Catholic Action are mandates, just as the responsibilities already imposed on several works of lay apostolate prior to or subsequent to the creation of the latter, are numerous and solemn mandates.
- 3) The analogy between the imperative forms of both tasks does not exclude a substantial diversity in the powers bestowed in one and the other case. The hierarchy received, from Our Lord, the task to govern. The laity received, from the hierarchy, not governmental functions, but tasks essentially proper to subjects.
- 4) Indeed, the allegation that the imperative character of the mandate received by the laity endows them with any hierarchical authority is ridiculous, because if such were the case no one could ever exercise authority without implicitly bestowing it on the subject over whom he exercises it.
- 5) The power of governing that the hierarchy possesses stems from an act of Our Lord's will, which could have been granted

without an imperative form, i.e., as a mere concession or faculty to act; and thus one proves that the essential source of the powers of the hierarchy is not the imperative character of the mandate.

6) Because of this, the wisdom of our canon lawyers never understood the mandate imposed on organizations other than Catholic Action to have elevated these organizations from the condition of subjects to that of government; and there is no reason for the mandate imposed on Catholic Action, essentially identical to the others, to have that effect.



## Chapter 4

### The Definition of Pius XI

#### **One More Argument in Favor of the Hierarchical Essence of the Apostolate of Catholic Action: the Definition of Catholic Action by His Holiness Pius XI**

The problem of participation can be raised at this point. The theoreticians of Catholic Action who claim that it possesses a juridical position essentially different from that of the other works of lay apostolate base themselves on a twofold argument. We have already examined the first argument, that of the mandate, and proved that it has no value.

The second argument is based on the fact that Pius XI defined Catholic Action as participation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church. These teachers affirm that while other organizations are mere collaborators, Catholic Action is a participant in the hierarchical apostolate itself and thus has its own juridical essence different from that of the other works.

#### **Erroneous Theses**

What scope should be attributed to this understanding of "*participation*"? Opinions differ, some affirming that Catholic Action became an integral element of the hierarchy itself, others understanding that it exercises hierarchical functions without itself being included among the ranks of the hierarchy.

#### **The Manner of Refuting These Theses**

Our analysis of these teachings will maintain that:

- a. both share a false premise that renders them erroneous;
- b. their differentiating traits are also based on erroneous arguments;
- c. even if their imagined juridical positions were theologically admissible, an analysis of the words of Pius XI does not justify the affirmation that such status has been given to Catholic Action.

#### **The Elements of the Issue**

In keeping with the method we have used so far, we will begin by stating the elements of the issue.

In the preceding chapter we saw that there is an essential difference between the powers imposed by the Divine Savior on the hierarchy of the Church and the tasks given by the hierarchy to the faithful. The former are rights in themselves, and pertain to government, the latter are tasks of subjects. The principle defined by the infallible authority of the Vatican Council (c. 10) is based on this:

*The Church of Jesus Christ is not a society of equals, as if all the faithful had among themselves the same rights; rather It is an unequal society and this not only because among the faithful, some belong to the clergy and others to the laity, but also because in the Church there is, by divine institution, a power with which some are endowed so as to sanctify, teach and govern, and with which others are not endowed.*

And the Council adds (c. 11): "*If anyone affirms that the Church was divinely instituted as a society of equals . . . let him be anathema.*"

### **The Error Common to the Two Statements We Refute**

The first question we should pose, therefore, is this: Is it possible to admit that Catholic Action is an integral element of the Church's hierarchy, or that, while not having hierarchical rank, it is at least invested with hierarchical functions?

When establishing Catholic Action, His Holiness Pius XI encouraged all the faithful to work within it and thereby granted all of them the right to join it. This is so true that some people maintain that all Catholics, even those who practice merely the "minimum" necessary to avoid falling into mortal sin, have the right and obligation to enroll in Catholic Action. There are again some who believe that even Catholics who live in the habitual state of mortal sin can and should enroll in Catholic Action. Curiously enough, those who think this way are, in general, the ones who most ardently plead for the idea that Catholic Action is an integral part of the hierarchy or that it at least exercises functions of a hierarchical character.

This said, we conclude that:

1. If all Catholics, even those living in the state of mortal sin, must join Catholic Action and the latter is an integral element of the hierarchy, then all the faithful have the obligation to become part of the hierarchy, a heretical opinion clearly contrary to the decisions of the Vatican Council.



2. If all Catholics who live in the state of grace can or should join Catholic Action, and if the latter is an integral element of the hierarchy, and as, on the other hand, the state of grace is accessible to all the faithful and is a state to which God calls everyone, one would conclude that everyone is called by God to be part of the hierarchy, which absolutely cannot be reconciled with the definitions of the aforementioned Council.

3. While Catholic Action is only for "*the best among the good*," according to the beautiful expression of Pius XI in the encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, nevertheless no matter how hard one tries to refine this notion, it is not possible to maintain that the Holy Father would want the entrance into Catholic Action only of those elements called to a high sanctity which is not the vocation of the average faithful. So, even in the sense of an elite endeavor, Catholic Action would still be accessible to people of a degree of holiness to which all the faithful are called. Now then, as the Holy Ghost calls all the faithful to such holiness, if Catholic Action were an integral element of the hierarchy, the Holy Ghost would be calling all the faithful to be part of the hierarchy, which also contradicts the text of the Vatican Council.

There was no shortage of highly meritorious authors who understood that Catholic Action, while not forming part of the hierarchy and without possessing hierarchical rank, nevertheless possessed hierarchical functions.

In effect, the functions of the hierarchy, those of Holy Orders as much as those of jurisdiction, can be delegated or communicated, at least in part, without the person who exercises them by delegation or communication becoming an integral part of the hierarchy. Thus, the function of confirming—this is the example given by a learned and illustrious author—is proper to the bishop in the hierarchy of Holy Orders. Now, this function can be delegated to a priest, who, by such delegation, neither becomes a bishop nor obtains a special post in the hierarchy of Holy Orders. The functions of the hierarchy can be delegated, therefore, to someone who is not part of it.

Accepting this thesis only for the sake of argument, we reach an interesting set of conclusions that lead us to realize its complete opposition to the doctrine of the Vatican Council:

1. The Council says that "*there is in the Church a power with which some are endowed so as to sanctify, teach, and govern, and with which others are not endowed;*" supernatural society is, therefore not only unequal because some have greater powers than others, but even more, because there are some elements with no power at all while others possess power. In other words, there are subjects and governors.

2) Now, if Catholic Action receives hierarchical functions albeit without a hierarchical post, it receives a hierarchical power, and especially so considering that this power is not bestowed upon it transitorily but rather definitively since nothing indicates that Catholic Action is an institution founded only as an emergency measure.

3) The founding of Catholic Action would have implied, therefore, for the laity, the obligation, or at least the right—which according to divine and ecclesiastical recommendation they should implement—to raise themselves to the exercise of hierarchical functions. This would erase the essential distinction existing between subjects and governors.

Someone could object that there will always be people who resist and who will not join Catholic Action. As a result, there will always be subjects, and, therefore, the essential inequality of the Holy Church will not disappear. The argument does not hold. In effect, it would always remain true that, in accordance with the Church's desire, everyone should be part of Catholic Action, and therefore, the Church would desire that the category of subjects disappear. Now then, the Church cannot have such a desire, since the Vatican Council declared that the distinction between subjects and governors is of divine law. Thus, the Church, being infallible and incapable of contradicting herself, did not desire it.

\* \* \*

Having thus proven that both doctrines on "*participation*" presuppose the possibility of a juridical situation in Holy Church that is impossible, and that both share a common underlying error, let us now see how they differ and how both are erroneous in these differences as well.

### **The Particular Error of Those Who Maintain That Catholic Action Participates in the Hierarchy**

We know that in Holy Church women are not capable of belonging to the hierarchy, that is, neither the *Hierarchy of Orders* nor the *Hierarchy of Jurisdiction*. Both women and men were called, however, to join Catholic Action, and no item can be shown in any papal document that specifies an essential difference between the juridical positions of men and women in Catholic Action. As a result, there is not, to our knowledge, a single commentator of Catholic Action who maintains the existence of such an essential difference. Therefore, the position that a man has in Catholic Action is identical to that a woman can receive within the Holy

Church. So, it is not a position that integrates him into the hierarchy, to which women cannot have access. Besides, with no intention of underestimating the invaluable services rendered by what the Liturgy calls "*devotus femineus sexus*,"<sup>1</sup> services for the Church that began with Our Lady and that will only terminate with the end of times, it is proper to remember that Holy Church rules that in confraternities erected "*for the embellishment of public worship*,"<sup>2</sup> "*women may be enrolled...only for the purpose of gaining the indulgences and spiritual favors granted to the members.*"<sup>3</sup>

What would Saint Paul say if he heard mention of this idea of women being incorporated into the hierarchy, he, who wrote to Timothy: "*Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to use authority over the man: but to be in silence.*"<sup>4</sup> He added, writing to the Corinthians: "*Let women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak, but to be subject, as also the law saith...For it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church.*"<sup>5</sup>

This stated, it is easy to understand how it is contrary to the spirit of the Church and the character of ecclesiastical legislation for women to exercise a power of hierarchical nature.

### **The Particular Error of Those Who Maintain That Catholic Action Has Hierarchical Functions**

As for those who affirm that Catholic Action has a hierarchical function without a hierarchical position, we will not examine whether or not their opinion is compatible with the preceding argument. Suffice it to show that they stem from a false starting point, as they seem to ignore that every function given to someone in a permanent way implies the creation of a post. It is true that a simple priest can administer the sacrament of Confirmation, without, as a result, acquiring a new position in the hierarchy of Holy Orders. But when he exercises this function in a permanent capacity and as result of his office, he receives a position and a rank of his own. Such is the case of Apostolic Prelates and Apostolic Vicars, simple priests with important elements of the powers of a bishop. Hierarchical powers are divisible. Hence the institution by the Church of levels in the hierarchy, side by side

---

<sup>1</sup> "The devout feminine sex."

<sup>2</sup> T. Lincoln Bouscaren, S.J. and Adam C. Ellis, S.J., *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1951), Can. 707 §2, p. 367. [Trans.: All of the author's quotes and crossreferences to Canon Law refer to the Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law of 1917.]

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Can. 709 §2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. 2:11-12. [Trans.: Unreferenced biblical quotes are from the Douay Rheims version. NAB-referenced quotes are from the *New American Bible*.]

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 14:34-35.

with the levels of divine institution. Nevertheless, whenever this separation is done on a permanent basis, and someone is benefited permanently thereby, a post is created for the person in charge of this hierarchical function, which in every case is also hierarchical even though not one of the degrees of the hierarchy itself. In view of what the Vatican Council affirmed, how can one not perceive the difficulties that stem from the idea that not only one or another of the faithful, but the whole mass of them, could have access to such posts?

True, certain functions of the hierarchy of jurisdiction could, in theory, be made available to laymen. But this is something quite different from associating, even potentially, the **mass** of the laity to the exercise of these functions.

### **Conclusion**

There is no "*participation*" of Catholic Action, therefore, either in the hierarchy or in the hierarchical functions. If Pius XI used the expression "*participation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church*" to define Catholic Action, this definition must be understood according to what has already been said, as it is a general rule that any definition must be understood according to the set of principles of the person who made it.

Should we understand that Pius XI used an unfortunate expression, susceptible to false interpretations, when he defined Catholic Action as "*participation?*" Shall we be forced to torture the text, to twist its upright interpretation in order not to establish an opposition between him and the Vatican Council? In no way. Stating that the laity "*participates by Catholic Action in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church,*" the Holy Father used an expression that, in a perfectly normal and exact sense, adheres to and is consistent with what the Vatican Council defined, as we will now demonstrate.

\* \* \*

### **Even If the Previously Refuted Theses Were Admissible, Pius XI Did Not Give Catholic Action Participation in the Hierarchy or in Hierarchical Functions**

The word "apostolate" derives from the Greek word *apóstolos*, to send. We can take it in two principal senses.

As we saw, Our Lord Jesus Christ in fact gave the hierarchy the mission of distributing the fruits of the Redemption, and He accompanied this imperative gift with the privilege of exclusivity, so that this mission can only be accomplished by the hierarchy or by those who, not members of it, are mere instruments of it, accomplish the plans it has in mind, and obey the guidelines it gives toward this end. In this radical and absolute instrumentality resides all the legitimacy of the faithful's collaboration with the hierarchy in apostolic activity. If this instrumentality were to cease to exist, the hierarchy would be unable to use these instruments, and the faithful, unable to legitimately cooperate with it.

It is not the case here to know in what manner or by what kind of voluntary act the hierarchy subordinates the lay apostolate to its intentions. Whether by an imperative order, by advice, or by an express or tacit permission to act, the will of the hierarchy must be inserted in the act of the layman lest it should be radically illicit.

### **Analysis of What "Hierarchical Apostolate" Is**

Let us now see in what sense the expression "*hierarchical apostolate*" can be used. It may refer to:

1. the mission, task, or responsibility given by Our Lord to the hierarchy;
2. the acts of apostolate which by nature are essentially hierarchical and which the hierarchy could not cease to exercise without abdicating inalienable and essential parts of its power.

### **Relationship between Hierarchical Apostolate and Lay Apostolate**

Let us examine the first sense. What is the mission given by Our Lord to the hierarchy? As we saw, it is the distribution of the fruits of Redemption. In this task, there are certainly functions which can, in a merely instrumental way, be exercised by the mass of the faithful. As we saw, every instrumental—and merely instrumental—collaboration it may thus render to the hierarchy will be legitimate.

Merely legitimate? Not merely legitimate, but clearly and unmistakably desired by the Redeemer. In effect, He instituted a hierarchy which is obviously insufficient to fulfill its own purpose in all of its extension without the assistance of the faithful; in this way the evident will of the Savior was expressed, that the faithful be the hierarchy's instrumental collaborators in the fulfillment of the great work committed to

its sole charge. This is to say, in the words that the first Pope wrote, "*But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: THAT YOU MAY DECLARE HIS VIRTUES, WHO HATH CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS, INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT.*"<sup>6</sup>

So embedded in the thought of Pius XI is this notion that he does not hesitate to label as Catholic Action the efforts developed by the laity in this line since the dawn of the Church's life. Let us listen to him:

*The first spread of Christianity in Rome itself happened through and because of Catholic Action. Could it have been done otherwise? What would the Twelve have done, lost in the immensity of the world, had they not gathered people about them...Saint Paul closes his Epistles with a list of names: a few priests, many seculars, some women: "Help those women who have labored with me in the Gospel (Phil. 4:3). It is as if he had said: They belong to Catholic Action."*<sup>7</sup>

There were, therefore, two missions in pursuance of the same objective, one for the hierarchy, the other for the faithful; one to govern, the other to serve and obey. Both missions come from the same divine Author, both should be performed through work and struggle, and have as a common purpose the same goal, that is, the expansion and exaltation of the Church.

In other words, the mission of the faithful consists in exercising **the part** of instrumental collaborators in the mission of the hierarchy, that is, THE FAITHFUL PARTICIPATE IN THE HIERARCHICAL APOSTOLATE AS INSTRUMENTAL COLLABORATORS, since "having part" means, in the most proper sense of the word, to participate.

Thus, giving to the words "apostolate" and "participation" their natural meaning, without tormenting a single word of the pontifical definition nor distorting any meanings, we reach the conclusion that Pius XI, in affirming that Catholic Action is a participation in the hierarchical apostolate, wished to say that it is purely and simply a collaboration, a work that is essentially instrumental and whose nature does not diverge essentially in any way from the apostolate task carried out by organizations alien to the structures of Catholic Action, and that the latter is a subject-organization like every and any organization of the faithful. This, by the way, was stated by Pius XI himself, when he said, in the speech to the bishops and pilgrims of Yugoslavia, on May 18, 1929, "*Catholic Action is not a*

---

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. 2:9. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>7</sup> Pius XI, Address to the Affiliated Workers of the Feminine Youth of Italian Catholic Action, Mar. 19, 1927, in Alonso, pp. 104-105.

*novelty of the present times. The Apostles laid its foundations when, in their pilgrimages to spread the Gospel, they asked help from the laity.*"<sup>8</sup> In other words, the Pope said that the essence of Catholic Action is absolutely the same as that of the lay collaboration rendered since the early times of the Church.

Summarizing, in the plans of Providence the mission of the faithful participates in the mission of the hierarchy as an instrument participates in the work of the artist. Between mission and mission, or work and work, the participation is absolutely the same. As with the artist, the quality of the agent does not pass intrinsically to the instrument but takes advantage of certain ordinary qualities of the instrument for the fulfillment of the purpose that is properly and exclusively the artist's own; so also the hierarchical nature of the mission entrusted to the Twelve and their successors does not pass on to the instrumental collaboration of the faithful but rather makes use of this collaboration for a purpose that transcends the capacity of the faithful and pertains solely to the hierarchy. Art is exclusive to the artist, and in no way can it be ascribed to the brush.

As can be seen, the relationships between work and work, mission and mission, constitute an effective and real participation, conforming in everything to the demands of philosophical terminology no matter how strict: to participate is to take part.

All of this means that the classical definition of Pius XI should be understood as a participation of the faithful in the apostolate of the Church, which is hierarchical, and not in the sense of participation of the faithful in the authority and apostolic functions that only the hierarchy can exercise in the Church.

### **Did the Definition of Pius XI Give the Laity a Participation in the Hierarchical Powers?**

Many authors on Catholic Action, nevertheless, choose to accept the latter of the aforementioned meanings as the exclusive expression of Pius XI's thought. Interpreting the term "*participation*" in only one of the various senses that philosophical terminology legitimately gives it, they inferred, as a result, that the laity is integrated into the hierarchy or, at least, exercises essentially hierarchical functions.

We already demonstrated that this interpretation is erroneous since it conflicts with the Vatican Council. We shall now show that it is unfounded.

---

<sup>8</sup> Pius XI, Address to the Bishops and Pilgrims of Yugoslavia.

## Various Meanings of "Participation"

In logic one learns that words may be univocal, equivocal, or analogous. Only univocal words admit just one meaning. Analogous words are those which have, legitimately, a partially identical and partially different meaning. In the best philosophical terminology, then, analogous words have, in an absolute and indisputable way, more than one meaning, as, for example, the analogous verb par excellence, "*to be*," which is the base of all human knowledge and is applied legitimately in any of its innumerable meanings.

## Which of Them Is the Legitimate One?

Any freshman in philosophy possesses this notion and is not unmindful that the word "*participation*" is analogous, signifying proportionally identical but partially different realities, such as, for instance, the following kinds of participation:

- a) integral participation;
- b) potential univocal participation;
- c) potential analogous participation.

If we were to admit as philosophically correct only the first two meanings, we would necessarily fall into pantheism when metaphysics states that "*the contingent being has being by participation of the necessary being.*" Consequently, all these cases have a strictly philosophical value.

Thus, it is not true that when an analogous word is used in philosophical language, one should only understand the word in its most exclusive sense. If such had been the intention of Pius XI, he would have affirmed that the apostolate of Catholic Action is an integral participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy or, in other words, that Catholic Action is an integral element of the hierarchy. As this statement is heretical, it could not have been his intention. On the other hand, Pius XI directly excluded this use of the word "*participation*" when, in his Letters *Con singular complacencia*<sup>9</sup> and *Quae Nobis*,<sup>10</sup> and in *Laetur Sane* he affirmed that the "*lay people should come to take part, in a sense, in the apostolate of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.*" As the renowned Msgr. Luigi Civardi points out,<sup>11</sup> this expression shows well what this

---

<sup>9</sup> Pius XI, Letter *Con Singular Complacencia* to the Episcopate of the Philippines, Jan. 18, 1939.

<sup>10</sup> Pius XI, Letter *Quae Nobis* to Cardinal Bertram, Nov. 13, 1928.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Boletins da AÇÃO Católica*, Nov. 1939.



most worthy author calls the "*relative meaning*" of the word "*participation*."

Faced with several legitimate meanings, which should one choose? Having denied the choice of the narrower meanings over the less narrow ones, we have a very sure criterion.

### **Participation and Collaboration**

Among the various interpretations of the word "*participation*," there is one that has precisely the meaning of collaboration. It is "*potential analogous participation*." In the sense we are using the expression "*hierarchical apostolate*," it in fact refers to the apostolic duties that are proper for the hierarchy as such to perform. Now, the apostolate the laity can perform participates in the apostolate proper to the hierarchy as such through a material resemblance founded in reality. The specific form of such apostolate differs, however, between one and the other case, since the action of subjects cannot be identified with the hierarchical action. In this perfectly philosophical sense, the collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church is a true potential analogous participation, in which there is nothing metaphoric.

### **The Definition of Pius XI: Its True Meaning**

We know that this was the sense in which Pius XI used the word, it being affirmed by the Pontiff himself, with dazzling clarity and piercing evidence, when he defined Catholic Action, sometimes as "*participation*" and at other times as "*collaboration*" in the hierarchical apostolate, thus giving us to understand that the defined object was as much participation as collaboration. In other words, it was that form of participation that is entirely equivalent to collaboration.

So, even if we were to accept the meaning of the word "*apostolate*" that we use here *argumentandi gratia*,<sup>12</sup> sound logic would lead us to understand that the "participation in the hierarchical apostolate" is merely "*collaboration*."

In fact, in the thought and pen of Pius XI, the words "*participation*" and "*collaboration*" are equivalent. This is said by one of the most learned researchers and commentators on the papal documents about Catholic Action. Writing on this subject, Archbishop Guerry, in his very well-known work *L'Action Catholique*, emphasizes that the "*Holy Father uses in his definitions the words collaboration and participation, sometimes*

---

<sup>12</sup> "For argument's sake."

*in the same phrase, but more often separately and **without distinction between one and the other.***"<sup>13</sup> This declaration is precious, since Archbishop Guerry is generally considered, as we said, one of the best experts on the numerous pontifical texts regarding Catholic Action, and he made a compilation of them that has spread worldwide. Having said this, we refrain from reproducing here the multiple texts that justify the illustrious writer's affirmation. And when it comes to writing about Catholic Action, it is superfluous to emphasize the authority of Msgr. Civardi, which is worldwide.<sup>14</sup> In the article quoted above, the illustrious author of *Manual of Catholic Action* points out that in more than one papal document the word "*participation*" is interchanged with the word "*collaboration.*"

If Pius XI made no distinction between the two words, what right do we have to establish such distinction, dwelling on the niceties of arguments with the intention of establishing between the words a difference of meaning that evidently was not in the Pope's mind? "*Where the law does not distinguish it is illicit for anyone else to do so.*" Hence, Monsignor Civardi rightly affirms in the aforementioned article, that the word "*collaboration*" helps us gauge the scope of the word "*participation*" in the writings of Pius XI.

This rule of exegesis is of elementary common sense. When two different words are used to designate the same object, it is evident that they are used in the same sense. This principle of hermeneutics is explained by one of Brazil's most eminent jurists, Carlos Maximiliano, who defines it thus: "*If the object is identical, it seems natural that the words, though different, have a similar meaning.*"<sup>15</sup>

The advocates of the opinion we refute hold that there is an unbridgeable divide between the concepts of participation and collaboration. If that is the case, the Holy Father, when designating the same object with both words, used one of them in an elastic sense. Which one of them? He himself says that Catholic Action is "*somehow a participation.*" So, the same partisans of the refuted opinion must understand that Pius XI defined Catholic Action as a legitimate collaboration and that he somewhat forced the meaning of "*participation.*" We do not even concede, however, that Pius XI forced the meaning of the word "*participation.*"

---

<sup>13</sup> Most Rev. Emile Guerry, *L'Action Catholique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1936), p. 159. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>14</sup> [Trans.: In 1925, Pope Pius XI appointed Msgr. Civardi Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Central Office of the Italian Catholic Action.]

<sup>15</sup> Carlos Maximiliano, *Hermenêutica e aplicação do Direito*, p. 141.

In the present case, the word "*collaboration*" has only one meaning, and the word "*participation*" has several: one, broad as it might be, is collaboration. Consequently, this is the sense of both words. We insist also that Pius XI, who said that Catholic Action is "*somehow*" a participation, never said that it is "*somehow*" a collaboration, always using the latter word without any kind of restriction.

### **Semi-official Clarification of the Definition of Pius XI**

Having ascended to the Throne of Saint Peter, Pius XII was not deaf to the rumble of rash opinions on this subject spread just about everywhere. And, probably not wishing to proceed with the severity of a judge before acting with the mildness of a father, he delivered an allocution more than two years ago that was published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the quasi-official publication of the Holy See. The Holy Father referred to Catholic Action more than twelve times, exclusively using the words "*collaboration*" and "*cooperation*," and omitting the word "*participation*." If the Pope had wanted to avoid any abusive interpretation of the word "*participation*," he would not have acted in any other way; and that is enough to understand what the Vicar of Christ had in mind. But the Holy Father did not stop there: Recommending the greatest harmony between Catholic Action and the previously existing organizations of piety, he stated:

*Italian Catholic Action, while being the principal organization of militant Catholics, admits at its side other associations that also depend on ecclesiastical authority, some of which, having aims and methods of apostolate, can well be considered collaborators in the hierarchical apostolate.*

In other words, it is the Pope himself who affirms the identical position of both Catholic Action and auxiliary associations as collaborators in regards to the hierarchy, and implicitly makes it clear that when Pius XI spoke of "*participation*," he gave this word no other meaning than that of "*collaboration*."

The problem, by the way, was expressly aired in an article published in Italy, and transcribed in the *Boletim da Ação Católica Brasileira*, by His Eminence Cardinal Piazza, appointed by Pius XII a member of the Episcopal Commission directing Catholic Action in Italy. We transcribe the precious document in its entirety as an appendix. No one can dispute its authority.

It would be an insult to Holy Mother Church to suppose that Pius XII would have wanted to deny or correct Pius XI, all the more since the reigning Pontiff himself declared that in regards to Catholic Action he wanted to be nothing more than a faithful continuation of the work of Pius XI. On the other hand, it would

be an insult to Cardinal Piazza to suppose that, in carrying out a responsibility in the Pope's confidence, he would have taken a decisive attitude regarding a subject of such importance without the elementary precaution of first consulting the Pontiff, whose opinion it would be easy for him to obtain. Let us not imagine in the Holy Church of God the existence of such disorganization that not even the most modest private commercial enterprises could bear; no manager denies the existence of a juridical situation established by the business's owner without first consulting the latter. Would it be possible, on the other hand, to imagine that the Pope would have appointed to a position of such magnitude someone who disagreed with His Holiness on a fundamental subject intimately connected with the ecclesiastical administration to be implemented?

### **"Participation" in the Light of Canon Law**

Let us examine, finally, a serious difficulty raised by Canon Law against the opinion we challenge.

If the mandate, or participation, granted by Pius XI were to have the meaning we challenge, it would imply in the revocation of numerous and important articles of Canon Law, which currently establish the impossibility of the laity's access to hierarchical power.<sup>16</sup> Now, whoever is familiar with the Holy Church's process of government, the supreme care with which She legislates, and the perfect prudence with which She habitually presides over Her deliberations, cannot imagine that Pius XI would permit such an important alteration of Canon Law to dwell implicitly, as it were, in his definition of Catholic Action without some legislative act that would define and evince the exact scope of the new reform. Above all, one cannot imagine that Pius XI would destroy the current order of things without providing regulations for the new order at the very onset, thus abandoning the field of Holy Church to the free course of individual whims, fantasies, and passions, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, assumed frightening aspects. Whoever might think this way does not know the Holy Church of God, Her spirit, history, or customs. The least prudent head of state, the most careless provincial governor, the most ignorant leader of a municipality, would not act this way: the most elementary common sense would make him foresee the catastrophic consequences of his conduct. So also, the Holy Church of God did not act this way, nor could She have acted this way.

### **Conclusion**

---

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Can. 108.

What stands out in all of this is that even if the Holy Father had wanted to alter the juridical essence of the lay apostolate in Catholic Action, he did not do so.

We alert the reader to the fact that, as stated above, we accept the affirmation that Catholic Action has a mandate and a participation, but we maintain that the legitimate meaning of these words is nothing but "*collaboration*" and does not imply the recognition in Catholic Action of any juridical character different than that of other works of lay apostolate.

### **Notice**

This having been said, for the sake of convenience we will henceforth employ these words in their bad sense, which we impugn.



## Chapter 5

### Fundamental Errors

These notions can never be sufficiently emphasized, avoiding dangerous generalizations, ambiguous expressions, and illogicalities of all kinds, which have so deeply hindered the clarification of this matter. So many factors of confusion can result only in misunderstandings, frictions, and incompatibilities, thereby dividing souls and rendering almost barren any effort towards establishing the Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

It should be noted well, however, that peace, according to Saint Augustine, is the "*tranquility of order*." If we want peace, let us restore order, and if we want order, let us found everything upon Truth. It is not by keeping silent, by hiding or diluting truth that we will attain peace. Let us proclaim it in its entirety. There is no other way to achieve that decorous and much-longed for concord among souls.

If we insisted at such length on our thesis that the mandate of Catholic Action and the participation it affords the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church involve only and exclusively collaboration with the hierarchy, a docile, filial and submissive collaboration practiced without any kind of regret or displeasure, it was because we had reasons of capital importance. We are alarmed not only by the doctrinal errors contained in the theses we refute, but also by most deplorable events for which they have been the reason or pretext.

#### **A Consequence of the Errors We Refute**

It was claimed that Catholic Action, by conferring on its members a new dignity, placed them in a canonical situation radically and essentially different from that which the laity enjoyed in associations prior to Catholic Action or in organizations foreign to the framework of its fundamental associations.

#### **The Situation of the Clergy until Now**

No one is unmindful that in associations of apostolate the priest always occupies the most prominent place, not only from the perspective of mere protocol, but also because of his authority,

on which depends and under which functions, in final analysis, all the organisms or departments of religious organizations. In other words, the priest in the association represents Holy Church, and the lay leaders are his instruments. They will be the more meritorious the more docile they are in the fulfillment of their social aims. This is what happens, for example, in the Marian Congregations and Pious Unions of the Daughters of Mary. The high respect due to the priestly dignity, the evident advantage the Church enjoys when the priest exercises an eminent dominion over all social activities, everything comes together so that in our Catholic circles the militant layman deems himself more correct the more he is solicitous in obeying the Father Director's guidelines.

In many sodalities, as in the associations functioning in schools, the lay brother or nun has an analogous situation, albeit inferior to that of the director. The reason for this is obvious.

### **How Some Intend to Belittle and Ultimately Destroy This Situation**

Now, on the basis of this "*participation*" and of this "*mandate*," it has been contended that the laity demeans itself by obeying fully the ecclesiastical assistant and that Catholic Action leaders have an authority of their own that makes of the assistant a mere doctrinal censor of social activities. So long as an activity has nothing contrary to Faith or morals, the assistant should remain silent. In general, no distinction is made between an assistant who is pastor and one who is not. As for lay brothers and nuns, who are not priests, they are to simply stay quiet and vanish from the scene.

Many trusting souls believe that with this the rights of Holy Mother Church are entirely safeguarded. What an illusion! Of course, merely doctrinal problems do occur in the activities of Catholic Action wherein the assistant, by vetoing error or evil, will have implicitly made truth and good triumph. There are also practical issues regarding minute details of execution in which Catholic doctrine is not directly involved and in which the assistant normally may choose not to become involved (retaining, however, the power to do so when he sees fit). But between these two extremes there is an extensive intermediate zone, in which what is involved is not exactly a mere question of doctrine, but the application of doctrine to facts; the precise observation of concrete circumstances; the discernment of what constitutes, at a given moment, the greater glory of God; and so on. The assistant will surely find precious resources if he makes use of the insight



of well-schooled laymen in clarifying such questions. Woe to him, however, if he cannot say, in these matters, the final word!

Since the reason for such rash statements was the modification introduced in Catholic Action by the mandate or participation, it having been proved that neither one nor the other brought substantial alterations, the consequences tumble to the ground. It is not futile, however, to imagine what catastrophes these consequences would lead us to in practice.

### **Concrete Examples of What Would Result**

Let us imagine, with concrete examples, the situation resulting from that. Let us consider the case of a parish whose pastor is also the ecclesiastical assistant of the local Catholic Action nuclei. With his theological wisdom, pastoral zeal, and priestly experience, and strengthened in the certainty of his judgments by the grace of state and the irreplaceable knowledge of the needs of souls that only the practice of the confessional gives, the priest sees all the problems, dangers and needs that arise in the field the Holy Ghost placed under his responsibility. Because of the lack of priests, the immensity of the work, and the impermeability of certain groups to the priest's influence, he feels all the need—which Pius XI had seen with the keen gaze of a lynx—to multiply his own resources. He appeals to Catholic Action, that is, to those whom the Pontiff himself termed "*the arms of the Church.*" He gathers together, therefore, the parochial sectors of Catholic Action. And immediately the fight starts. Catholic Action moves only through the impulse and initiative of the laity, so the pastor must patiently argue to persuade them that the Catholic Action nuclei of the parish should recommend that this virtue be preferred to that; that they should fight the vices rooted in the region rather than nonexistent defects; that they should work to repair the parish church rather than the dispensary; that they should build a dispensary rather than a center for associations; that they should build a center for associations rather than nothing at all. As none of these matters involves Faith and morals, it is, in final analysis, Catholic Action that will decide the timeliness, feasibility, and usefulness of the parish priest's plans, while he, who has the right of veto only in matters of Faith and morals, patiently awaits the verdict of the new officers of the hierarchy, or participating elements thereof, who will advise him if his plans will be executed or not, and, if so, to what degree and by what means. It is enough to have but a slight idea of the authority and responsibilities given to parish priests by Canon Law to understand the absurdity of this situation, and to see that the simple role of censor is far from providing the pastor with the means of action necessary to fulfill his functions

and to carry the crushing burden inherent to his office. Such an erroneous situation would easily border on the ridiculous were we to imagine it happening in some small country parish where the pastor himself would have to contend with the local male and female directors of Catholic Action, whose cultural level, in certain regions, will not be much superior to that strictly necessary for the reading of a cookbook or doing the bookkeeping of the local tavern.

We will return to this subject later. For now, let us continue showing the dreadful consequences of this strange doctrine.

### **Are We Returning to the Time of "Masonified" Confraternities?**

The reader has certainly perceived the analogy between the situation in store for the ecclesiastical assistant in Catholic Action and that of ecclesiastical authority in the old "masonified" confraternities.

In the Catholic Action nuclei, as in the old masonified confraternities, the clarity of the subtle limits existing between spiritual and temporal matters can be easily disturbed with specious arguments, like this one of the Fraternity of the Blessed Sacrament in rebellion against Bishop Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira because they refused to exclude from their midst members who were Masons: "*The existence and purpose of a fraternity,*" it claimed,

*is a voluntary act of its associates and, as long as the laws of the country and of the Church are respected, only the member brothers have the right to propose an alteration or modification of the norms they themselves organized, in accordance with their interests and experience.*<sup>1</sup>

The Imperial Council of State concluded in the same sense, giving the government the lion's share, and declared that

*the organic constitution of the fraternities in Brazil being under the jurisdiction of civil authority, and the approval and supervision of the religious side being the only area pertinent to the diocesan prelates, it did not pertain to the Most Reverend Bishop's domain to order the Fraternity to exclude any of its members because of their belonging to Freemasonry, and that he could not have based himself, therefore, on this "disobedience" to declare the Fraternity interdicted.*<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Antônio Manoel dos Reis, *O Bispo de Olinda perante a História: D. Frei Vital M. Gonçalves de Oliveira, dos Men. Capuchinos*, 1879, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

The errors presently being spread regarding Catholic Action threaten to lead us to this extremely sad situation. What a caricature of the grand dream of Pius XI!

### **Will One of Our Most Beautiful Traditions Disappear to Our Applause?**

Since the priest is left with only the function of censor, it is obvious that his position in the parochial environment changes radically. Until now the customs and pious traditions of our people have always reserved for the priest a unique situation in any ambience in which he happens to be. In meetings of religious associations, in civic events, and even in the purely temporal ceremonies at which he happens to be present for reasons completely apart from his ministry, the priest is given a place of unmistakable primacy. One need only glance through the photographs of festive events in any newspaper collection, not just Catholic ones but any paper, to verify how true this is. That which our elders perceived, and which is perceived even today in ambiances where only vague and rare religious traditions survive, some modernizing theoreticians of Catholic Action do not perceive; and one of them already gave us the displeasure of praising in a most blatant manner a certain European country where the priest no longer occupies the central place in the protocol for ceremonies of Catholic Action, but rather the place of an obscure and distant partner.

### **Will the Authority of the Pastor and School Directors Be Mutilated?**

If we are logical in the development of this doctrine, we must go further. If the priest is to be left with merely the role of doctrinal censor of Catholic Action's activities, it is obvious that the appointment of members to the board of directors of the various parochial nuclei, their eventual suspension, the admission of members, and the like, is to occur at the exclusive initiative of the laity itself, the priest being permitted only to oppose such names as may be contrary to faith or customs. The pastor cannot select those who seem to him more docile, zealous, capable, or influential. His natural collaborators are not freely chosen by him, and while in every government on earth the selection of one's immediate aides is considered a prerogative inherent to the exercise of authority, the parish government will, henceforth, constitute an exception.

Some elements are so imbued with this notion of superiority that they do not hesitate to remedy the "*deficiencies*" of many pastors

by installing nuclei of Catholic Action in their parishes against their will!

The same phenomenon occurs in schools and associations. We know of the case of an institution in which nuclei of Catholic Action were founded clandestinely because its ecclesiastical director would "*perhaps*" withhold approval for their immediate establishment. A venerable and illustrious priest, director of a school, told us that he once received the visit of a young man who came to **notify** him about the foundation of the Catholic Student Youth in his institution. The respectable director considered that permission would be necessary and that he was not inclined to give it to an unknown person. The answer was immediate: "*Father, I have the mandate of Catholic Action.*"

This is, a fortiori, the treatment tendered to religious who are not priests. Thus, whereas tradition and sense of propriety in the associations of piety that existed until now in schools and elsewhere bestowed on nuns and brothers the status of vice-directors, they are now severely proscribed from the meetings of Catholic Action by certain theoreticians, always under the pretext that they do not possess a mandate. And these doctrines proliferate! We know the case of a feminine association of Catholic Action which, gathered together in a school run by nuns, demanded the withdrawal of all the nuns from the meeting place as a condition for the work to begin. The essential difference between Catholic Action and associations like pious unions, Marian congregations, Leagues of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and the like, lies, according to such theoreticians, precisely in this "*self-government*," a consequence of Catholic Action's unique mandate. Such associations do not have a mandate and are unrestrictedly dependent on their respective ecclesiastical directors while the laity, raised by the mandate of Catholic Action to the category of participants in the hierarchy, depend only negatively on the ecclesiastical assistant, a mere censor.

We do not wish to depart from the central theme of this book, that is, Catholic Action. It would not be superfluous, however, to remember that the audacious and unfounded interpretation of what some theologians wrote on the "*passive priesthood*" of the laity contributes, in no small measure, to creating these deviations.

All of this finds its general expression in the following statement that could well be the motto for these doctrines: "*It is necessary that Catholic Action not be a dictatorship of priests and nuns.*"

**To What Will the Authority of the Bishops Be Reduced?**

Pressed by the midday clarity of certain papal documents, they recognize, of course, that Catholic Action, albeit independent of the clergy, does depend on the bishops. They even understand that the very mandate received has the effect of linking Catholic Action, over the head of the pastor, *directly* to the bishop, of whom it is a juridical extension. Therefore, they believe that only a bishop can perform the ceremony of reception of members of Catholic Action with due honor. All this notwithstanding, given that the very decorum of Holy Church demands that no one in a specific sector of Catholic Action be more in the bishop's confidence, as a rule, than the ecclesiastical assistant; given that the functions of the assistant are understood in an absolutely restricted way; given, on the other hand, that the bishop cannot be present everywhere, especially in a country with such vast dioceses as Brazil; given, finally, that the bishop cannot have the possibility of personally knowing laity in all the parishes of his diocese whom he can take into his immediate confidence; the result is that the Bishop's authority remains, in practice, almost entirely annulled. And not only in practice. The doctrinal exaggerations we referred to above concerning the "*passive priesthood*" of the laity profoundly undermined or deformed in certain souls the due respect owed to bishops. The *Boletim Oficial da Ação Católica Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro) of June 1942 narrates the typical case of a young man who wrote to a respectable bishop: "*best regards from your colleague in the priesthood.*"

It would not be necessary to say as much to understand that the doctrine of the incorporation of the laity to the hierarchy or to hierarchical functions through the mandate of Catholic Action, contains in its bosom consequences of immeasurable importance and, because of its very nature, facilitates, flatters, and stimulates man's natural tendency to rebellion. Will it be easy to extirpate this poison when it penetrates the masses and conquers them? Who would dare sustain such an illusion?

Thank God no alteration has been made, as we have shown, in the nature of the status of the laity enrolled in Catholic Action, so all of the feverish deliriums that alleged such alteration as their motive or excuse tumble to the ground. The layman of Catholic Action should feel honored to render full obedience to the ecclesiastical assistant.

## Chapter 6

### The Clergy in Catholic Action

We intend to close the considerations brought to mind by the problem of the mandate or participation, with a special reflection on the clergy's position in the Church.

#### Complexity of the Church's Government

Etymologically, the term *clergy* indicates the elect, the chosen ones. The body of the clergy is constituted of those persons who, endowed with a vocation, consecrate themselves completely to the divine ministry. With just a little reflection, one can see that no position of command, by its nature, by the weight of the responsibilities it imposes, and by the terrible complexity of the matters it treats, is more burdensome and demanding than the government of the Church. Precisely because of this, the Divine Redeemer wanted that there be within Holy Mother Church a category of men especially responsible for the distribution of the Sacraments and the direction of ecclesiastical affairs.

The functions of both the *hierarchy of orders* and the *hierarchy of jurisdiction* require such knowledge of doctrine, such great moral integrity, and such perfect renunciation of all earthly concerns that in the course of the twenty centuries of its existence, the legislation of the Church has been slowly but surely accumulating the necessary precautions for the perfect selection of the proper conditions for the formation and activities of the clergy.

#### Special Formation of the Clergy

The proper conditions for the formation of future clergy were established little by little, like successive conquests of experience in the service of high wisdom: major seminaries, minor seminaries, the manner of life, the curriculum of studies, the problems of the seminarians' spiritual formation, all have been the object of constant care of the Church, which has not spared the greatest efforts in this line. One can perceive in this legislation a constant concern to surround the formation of future priests and bishops with ever more complete guarantees.

To crown these efforts, not long ago the Holy See established a Congregation specially entrusted with this matter.

## **Invaluable Guarantees with Which the Church Protects Herself**

Legislation on the priest's way of life and moral obligations is also becoming ever richer. Two related regulations—firstly, the prohibition for a priest to dedicate himself to matters foreign to his ministry and, secondly, the prohibition, established in Canon Law, against entrusting hierarchical posts to those who are not clergymen—channel all the resources of this elite to the service of God and potentially or virtually place in the hands of the clergy the whole government of the Church.

Ecclesiastical legislation led the clergy's situation, slowly but surely, to this sublime elevation, weaving an admirable work around the elements of divine institution that the issue contains.

For this very reason, the zeal of the faithful has not been interrupted for even a moment in accompanying with their prayers, sacrifices, and resources the work of sanctification, recruiting, and formation of priests, while the great contemplative souls have consecrated their best expiations to this capital necessity of the Church.

## **Errors about the Essence of Catholic Action Expose These Guarantees to Most Grave Risks**

It will not be difficult to understand, after all of this, the absurdity of expecting that an elite thus formed be left in the realm of governance with only a ridiculous power of veto, while laymen—perhaps pious and learned, but who cannot offer the Church the irreplaceable guarantee of a whole course of preparation for the priesthood—come to acquire positions that give them, for all practical purposes, an authority greater in many emergencies than that of priests.

It is rash, in this matter, to argue on the basis of exceptions. For example, it is true—and military history is full of examples—that certain generals are born with such talent that they, without studies, can surpass in efficacy other generals with the finest academic formation. Yet, it is also true that no modern army allows the responsibilities of its officers to be placed in the hands of persons lacking a set course of studies, as the army has a vital necessity to protect itself against the thousand and one adventurers who would otherwise seize its reins of command. If this reflection is made regarding the order of ideas we have been describing, the rest becomes clear.

## **Important Exceptions:**

### **a) In Regard to the Intentions with Which Many People Defend These Errors**

We fulfill a serious duty of justice by stating that, while it is the old spirit of rebellion that frequently peers out through imprudent statements on Catholic Action, it is not rare, on the other hand, to notice in certain souls a generous desire of sanctification and conquest. The infiltration, for a long time, of liberal principles in certain spheres of the Catholic laity produced such deep devastation that every zealous soul preserved an explainable horror of that period. The defense and expansion of Catholic principles was deemed the exclusive task of the clergy, and many laymen judged that they acted in an admirably correct way by limiting themselves to a strictly literal fulfillment of the most essential obligations imposed by the laws of God and the Church. As a result, religious associations would quite often complain of a chronic apathy that plunged them into a most deplorable routine; and this picture was in disconcerting contrast to the conquering audacity of the sons of darkness, before whose enterprising efforts Christian traditions were increasingly cowed, diluted, and amalgamated with a thousand errors, giving way to an entirely pagan order of things.

The total heedlessness of spirit with which some souls, zealous for the glory of God, welcomed the prospect of lay participation in hierarchical posts or functions was, therefore, quite explainable. Such structural reform seemed destined to knock to the ground the whole inheritance of religious laxity, causing the laity to become directly interested in the work of the hierarchy and thus giving the lay apostolate a laudable increment.

The great error of our time consisted precisely in attributing too great an efficacy to structural and juridical reforms, presuming that they could bring about, of themselves, the rebuilding of a crumbling civilization. In the political sphere, the correction of liberalism was attempted by means of dictatorship. In the economic sphere, correction was attempted by means of state corporatism. In the social sphere, inhibition of liberalism was attempted through police regulation. And in spite of this, no one would dare sustain that present conditions are more prosperous, tranquil, or felicitous than those of the Victorian era, during which liberalism reached its apex.

The radical inefficacy of the remedies applied in trying to correct evil led us to even greater evils. What was needed was a reform of mentalities; reforming the laws proved to be futile and made even more evident the most dangerous consequences that the



wrong medicine can produce in life-threatened patients. Liberalism was an evil: totalitarianism is a catastrophe.

The cure for evils that many try to fight more with generosity than with perspicacity, by means of the doctrine of the mandate, is much more easily found in a methodical and secure religious instruction, and in a spiritual formation which is generous and thirsty for sacrifice. To say it all in a word, it is not in structural reforms that we should place our most ardent hopes of sanctification and conquest. If in each diocese or parish there were a group, small as it might be, of laymen capable of understanding and living the book of Abbot Jean-Baptiste Chautard, O.C.S.O., *The Soul of the Apostolate*, the face of the earth would be different.

**b) In Regard to the Advantage of the Spirit of Initiative and Frank Cooperation in the Laity**

We want to deal now with a subject which albeit not greatly linked with the preceding argumentation, is indispensable for understanding the spirit that moves us to write this book: Catholic Action will never be the realization of the grand design of Pius XI if its members are persons devoid of the spirit of initiative and conquest.

While maintaining that the plenitude of powers in Catholic Action rests with the ecclesiastical assistant, the lay directors being only the executors of his plans, we are far from saying that the ideal model of Catholic Action is one in which the priest is obliged to intervene at every moment, do everything himself, and multiply his own efforts, rather than giving ample autonomy to competent laymen who, perfectly identified with the true aims of the assistant, have the knowledge and ability to bring them to fruition, thus sparing the priest's efforts, not multiplying them. The formation given in Catholic Action must aim at this latter type of laymen, and only when it has a great number of these will Catholic Action be able to triumph. It will never be sufficiently emphasized that the Church in general, and the hierarchy in particular, have nothing to fear from the collaboration of laymen of this quality and that Pius XI, trusting generously in them, showed himself not imprudent, but wise.

What we do not want, however, is the presumption that the laity's activity can imply the limitation of the powers of the priest, who would thus be hindered from exercising his authority when, where, and as he sees fit, without having to answer for his actions to anyone save his bishop. In the final analysis, we do not want the priceless treasure reclaimed and preserved with such a heroic struggle by Bishop Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira and

Bishop Antonio Macedo Costa more than a half a century ago to be imprudently wasted.

**c) In Regard to the Preeminence of the Fundamental Organizations of Catholic Action over the Auxiliaries**

The problem of the relationships between Catholic Action and auxiliary associations is another matter usually linked to the problem of the mandate but having only a relative connection with it. The question is whether Catholic Action has preeminence over auxiliary associations. True, if Catholic Action participated in the hierarchy, it would have primacy over the other organizations, since these would be mere collaborators of the hierarchy. While contesting the highly controversial mandate, one can still say that Catholic Action, besides being the supreme militia—the "*organization princeps*," of the lay apostolate, as Pius XII called it, also exercises a "*rectrix*" function over all the apostolate activity of the laity, in charge of directing and coordinating their general activities and making use of auxiliary associations to fulfill the general goals of Catholic Action. In this case, it is only a question of positive legislation of the Church, and so the matter escapes the field of doctrinal controversy.

Among us, the matter is regulated in the bylaws of Brazilian Catholic Action—which possess the full vigor of law—and, therefore it only behooves us to obey them diligently and lovingly.

## **Part II**

# **Catholic Action and The Interior Life**



## Chapter 1

### Grace, Free Will, and Liturgy

While the problems raised in regard to Catholic Action and its relations with the hierarchy are numerous and complex, the issues related to Catholic Action and the interior life are no less so.

#### Liturgy and Interior Life

If some doctrinal deviations in regard to the question of the mandate could be explained by the forced, and even very forced, exegesis of certain papal declarations by the reading and sometimes audacious interpretation of certain European authors, we do not know how to explain the origin of some liturgical doctrines that unfortunately circulate by word of mouth in some circles of Catholic Action. The fact is that the apostles of these doctrines allege as the sole foundation for their position a single pontifical text, which is merely a verbal statement the Holy Father Pius X is said to have made to interlocutors worthy of all respect. This statement does not constitute a logical foundation for any error. Moreover, this use of it is grossly incorrect.

In fact, Pope Pius X himself reproved this form of argumentation:

*At all times, in the arguments about Catholic Action, one should avoid confirming the triumph of one's personal opinion by quoting words of the Sovereign Pontiff, claiming that they were spoken or heard in private audiences. One should avoid, a fortiori, doing so in public assemblies since, besides the scant respect thus shown to the Sovereign Pontiff, one runs a serious danger of misunderstandings, in accordance with each one's personal opinions. The unfailing way of knowing what the Pope wishes consists in restricting oneself to the acts and documents issued by competent authority.<sup>1</sup>*

Be that as it may, it is affirmed, maintained, and secretly whispered about that the practice of the liturgical life and a certain grace of state proper to Catholic Action, as well as the inebriating action of the grandeur of Catholic Action's ideals, reduce to silence the natural seduction to evil and diabolical temptations in the intimacy of its members.

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Pius X, Letter to the Bishops of Italy, July 28, 1904.

This implies an entirely new asceticism.

Without denying that fervor for the Church's liturgy constitutes one of the most beautiful manifestations of truly enlightened piety, and precisely because we consider the Sacred Liturgy, like the Church herself whose voice it is, "*a maiden with neither blemish nor wrinkle,*" we cannot admit that a well formed liturgical spirit can give origin to the disastrous consequences we will mention below.

The claim is made, in final analysis, that participation in the functions of the sacred liturgy furnishes the individual faithful with an infusion of grace so special that, as long as he behaves in a merely passive way, he will sanctify himself, because the effects of original sin and the diabolical temptations will be silenced in his bosom.

Thus, the sacred liturgy would supposedly exercise over the faithful a mechanical or magical action of an entirely automatic fecundity, rendering any effort at collaboration with the grace of God, on man's part, superfluous.

### **The "Mandate" and Interior Life**

Perhaps as a corollary of the mandate attributed to it, it is presumed that Catholic Action confers an identical grace of state. Finally, it is maintained that the simple fascination for Catholic Action's ideals of conquest is enough to immunize all the faithful against the seduction of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

These ideas extensively penetrated certain circles of Catholic Action and form the erroneous theology which holds that these same circles' principles in matters of apostolate strategy are nothing more than applied pastoral science.

### **Traditional Asceticism**

Once this intricate order of ideas is accepted, the whole concept of interior life is altered. Precisely because of this, a constant and effective struggle is waged in the circles dominated by this doctrine against all the traditional means of asceticism that proceed from recognition of the effects of original sin indicated by the Church and that implicitly teach man to take precautions against the deviations of his will and sensibility and to acquire a true dominion over one and the other through a generous correspondence to grace.

In this line, spiritual retreats preached according to the method of Saint Ignatius were not spared rebuke and harsh criticism, being described as hateful and backward. Retreats

should be replaced with days or weeks of study, something easily explained because the retreat aims above all at training the will to control one's passions. Once all this becomes unnecessary, a mere enlightenment of intellects in "*days of study*" and "*study centers*" is perfectly sufficient.

Private meditation is likewise conceived as mere enlightenment. These errors repudiate the examination of conscience, exercises of will, application of the sensibility, the so-called spiritual treasures, all of which are labeled as archaic methods, spiritual torture and so on.

### **The Work of the Counter-Reformation**

It is obvious that a great number of these deviations already attempted to infiltrate the Church in past centuries and especially during the Pseudo-Reformation.

The crushing of these attempts was the work, par excellence, of the sacred Council of Trent, the most beautiful schools of spirituality born during the Counter-Reformation, and the great saints they produced.

Precisely because the Holy Church's doctrine in regard to these errors shines in a particularly clear way in that Council, in the lives of those saints and in the splendor of those spiritual schools, some members of Catholic Action repudiate everything that comes to us from that glorious age, on the pretext that the spiritual schools of the time were imbued with a Protestant individualism from whose contagion they were unable to escape entirely.

They are equally displeased with Redemptorist missions preached according to the method of Saint Alphonsus Mary Liguori, as well as many of his works, particularly certain chapters on morality and Mariology.

They mock the contemplative orders, whom they accuse of leading a misguided contemplative life.

They ridicule the mystical works of Saint John of the Cross, which they call a "*deceit*."

Their great excuse is that these schools of spirituality are rife not only with individualism but even with "*anthropocentrism*," since they deviate one's eyes from God to fix them on human miseries and the struggles of the interior life. They also refer to this as "*virtue-centrism*."

They claim, as we have said, that all this constitutes an infiltration of Protestant individualism and Renaissance humanism into the Church.

## **The Authority of the Holy See**

In his letter *Con Singular Complacencia*, Pope Pius XI refuted this opinion, praising two typical fruits of the Ignatian spirit: the Marian Congregations and the Spiritual Exercises.

As for the latter, he said: *"It is with singular pleasure that we see the members of this peaceful Marian army...constantly temper their weapons in frequent spiritual retreats, and in the forge of the Exercises they practice every year."*<sup>2</sup>

The distinction is clear: It is not only retreats in general, but specifically the Spiritual Exercises that Pope Pius XII, as all of his predecessors, praises, blesses, recommends, and inculcates. We will return to this matter.

Still in this order of ideas, the innovators of Catholic Action actively oppose the Rosary and the Way of the Cross, devotions which, by demanding an effort of the will, are for this reason considered antiquated.

## **The Origin of These Errors**

It is not difficult to see that this whole chain of errors proceeds, in final analysis, from a spirit of independence and carefree enjoyment that endeavors to free man from the weight and struggles that the work of sanctification imposes.

With the spiritual combat eliminated, the life of a Christian seems to be for them an uninterrupted series of spiritual pleasures and consolations.

Thus, those who think this way avoid and even counsel against meditating on the sorrowful episodes of the life of the Redeemer, always preferring to see Him as a victor full of glory.

They expressly recommend ambiances impregnated with a joy that, while attributed to spiritual causes, shows itself eager for natural satisfactions.

Members of Catholic Action in some circles are taught to wear exclusively light-colored and joyful clothing in adolescent styles, to always maintain a cheerful attitude, and to avoid serious or sad topics.

As we will see momentarily, the old formulas of courtesy are severely condemned.

---

<sup>2</sup> Pius XI, *WHERE IS THIS FROM?*



## The Rules of Christian Modesty

A total camaraderie levels sexes, ages, and social conditions in an equality presented as the realization of Christian fraternity. Scripture warns us that "*the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth.*"<sup>3</sup> Yet, oblivious of the effects of original sin and diabolical temptations alike, they despise and mock many of the barriers that Christian tradition established between the sexes in society.

Among these barriers, some are designed not so much to protect the innocence of young ladies as their reputation. As these barriers in Brazil are very lively, they constitute a precious protection for the integrity of domestic life. Besides, they expressly conform to what Saint Paul says when he instructs us to avoid evil and even "*from all appearance of evil refrain yourselves.*"<sup>4</sup>

These people, however, under the deceitful pretext that the infraction of these customs is not intrinsically immoral, not only tolerate but recommend that members of Catholic Action put them aside.

Let us give an example: Everyone knows that, in theory, it is possible for a young lady to go out at night completely by herself with a group of young men who are not her relatives without thereby falling into sin. But in a country like Brazil, in which this dangerous habit has not been introduced, everyone knows how much society stands to gain by repudiating such an imprudent practice. Nevertheless, these people not only permit but advise such conduct in Catholic Action.

No one is unmindful of the multiple dangers that dances present. Dances, however, are not only tolerated but recommended; not only recommended but imposed. Spiritual retreats during carnival are considered a desertion, because a Catholic Action member must do apostolate amidst the pagan celebrations of the carnival.

Some claim that going to doubtful or scandalous places, taking "*the Christ*" there, would do apostolate.

Vaccinated against sin through the marvelous effects of the liturgy and of Catholic Action's mandate, other members would claim that, like salamanders, they could remain inside a raging fire without being burned.

Everything that reminds them of feminine delicacy irritates them since it accentuates the difference between the sexes. They fight

---

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 8:21.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. 5:22.

against wearing a veil in church, for example. They find no fault in women wearing men's pants or smoking.

Although the Church established a prudent distinction between the masculine and feminine branches of Catholic Action, some souls almost deny this distinction in practice as they want a complete intermingling of both in their respective activities, leisure time, and so on. Everything that speaks of a direct and up front combat against indecent fashions, bad books, bad company, and bad shows is often passed over in the deepest silence.

It is no wonder, therefore, that education in purity is frequently done in a rash way, soaked in morbid sentimentalism and paganizing ideas full of dangerous concessions to modern customs.

It would seem that so many and deplorable liberties are "*privileges*" inherent to Catholic Action. The old methods of mortification and flight from near occasions of sin were certainly very apt for old associations where one can really be severe and demanding. Catholic Action, however, supposedly represents a liberation from all this.

These precautions were like crutches on which the structural, juridical, organic and vital insufficiency of the old associations was supported. Catholic Action could and should do without all this.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of everything, however, we must emphasize that the promoters of such errors are very frequently persons of exemplary personal conduct and modesty in their dress. Because of this, far from serving the cause of good principles, they, on the contrary, further facilitate the spread of evil by giving these doctrines a disinterested and purely speculative character.

---

<sup>5</sup> "A fool will laugh at sin," says the Scriptures (Prov. 14:9); while "*the prudent man saw the evil, and hid himself; the simple passed on and suffered loss*" (Prov. 22:3). What harm? "*Look not upon the wine when it is yellow...but in the end, it will bite like a snake*" (Prov. 23:31-32), and "*thy eyes shall behold strange women, and thy heart shall utter perverse things. And thou shalt be as one sleeping in the midst of the sea, and as a pilot fast asleep, when the stern is lost*" (Prov. 23:33-34). What better image of the hardening of conscience? And the Scriptures continue: "*And thou shalt say: They have beaten me, but I was not sensible of pain: they drew me and I felt not*" (Prov. 23:35). It is the obstinate deafness to the voice of conscience resulting from not fleeing from the occasions of sin and from not following the counsel: "*Depart from the unjust, and evils shall depart from thee*" (Ecclus. 7:2).

The active and diligent interior struggle against the passions is always the condition for sanctification and even salvation. The Holy Ghost says: "*Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies*" (Ecclus. 18:30-31).



## Chapter 2

### Similarity to "Modernism"

#### A Complete Doctrinal System

It was necessary for us to make a combined exposition of all these erroneous principles so that it could be clearly perceived that we are in the presence, not of scattered errors, but of a whole doctrinal system rooted in fundamental errors and very logical in professing all the consequences resulting therefrom.

#### Difficult for Observers to Perceive

In view of the last chapter, our readers will have varying attitudes depending on the experiences each one has had and, above all, on the perspicacity each one has shown in analyzing the facts. Some will undoubtedly reject as unlikely the picture of a painful situation whose first signs they were fortunate enough to have been spared even the sight of. Others, on the contrary, will feel truly relieved to note that the clamor of vigilant consciences is sounding loud and clear against a state of affairs that threatens to become increasingly serious. To one and the other we recommend that they attentively analyze the deepest scope of all gestures, attitudes, and innovations they perceive in certain ambiances. If they do so they will always see that such peculiarities are explained by some more or less obscure doctrinal substratum, perfectly linked to a set of basic and fundamental principles that are the most profound sources of all this activity.

#### Because of the Methods Used to Spread It

This situation, though painful, is not new. Modernism, condemned by Pope Pius X in the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of September 8, 1907, contains doctrines and methods almost identical to those we are now describing; and we could well make a total description of the present movement with the encyclical in our hands. The Holy Father says,

*since the Modernists...employ a very clever artifice, namely, to present their doctrines without order and systematic arrangement into one whole, scattered and disjointed one from another, so as to appear to be in doubt and uncertainty, while they are in reality firm and steadfast, it will be of advantage, Venerable*

*Brethren, to bring their teachings together here into one group, and to point out the connexion between them.*<sup>1</sup>

This is the task we have set out to accomplish in regard to neo-modernism, dedicating to this purpose the second part of this work.

## **Man Should Be Delivered from the Sourness of the Interior Struggle**

This disposition necessarily generates a revolt and, consequently, the heedless rashness with which they attack everything that the Magisterium of the Church deems holy and venerable. This error, a typical fruit of our times, in some way resurrects the doctrine of Miguel de Molinos and places at its service the fighting methods and propaganda of Modernism.

Pius XI clearly saw this defect of contemporary man when, regarding the spirit of our days, he affirmed:

*The unbridled desire for pleasures, weakening the forces of the soul and corrupting good customs, destroys little by little the conscience of one's duty. In fact, only too numerous nowadays are those who, attracted by the pleasures of the world, abhor nothing more vividly and avoid nothing more carefully than the sufferings or voluntary afflictions of soul or body that present themselves, and who habitually behave, according to the words of the Apostle, like the **enemies of the Cross of Christ**. Now, no one can obtain eternal bliss if he does not renounce himself, if he does not carry his cross and does not follow Jesus Christ.*<sup>2</sup>

## **Giving an Erroneous Liturgical Formation**

The attempt to see in the Sacred Liturgy a source of automatic sanctification that exempts man from all mortification, from the effort of interior life, and from the fight against the devil and the passions, is vain and contradicts the teachings of the Church. In fact, as efficacious as the official prayer of Holy Mother Church may be and as superabundant as the infinite merits of the Holy Mass are,

*it is necessary that men complete, each one in his own flesh, the Passion of Jesus Christ, for although the Lord Jesus suffered for us, this does not exempt us from weeping and expiating for our sins, nor are we authorized to expiate them with negligence.*<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Sept. 8, 1907, no. 4, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_19070908\\_pascendi-dominici-gregis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis_en.html)

<sup>2</sup> Pius XI, Letter *Magna Equidem*, Aug. 2, 1924.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

It would also be interesting to read, in this regard, the quote from the work of Father de la Taille that we cite later on.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, by spreading such ideas (through their most effective propaganda methods) in a daring attempt to "reform" the concept of Christian piety and one of its most salient characteristics, namely the love of suffering, such members of Catholic Action, even though they may not know it, do the Church greater harm than declared enemies; and precisely for this very reason one can apply to them what Pius X said of the modernists:

*We allude, Venerable Brethren, to many who belong to the Catholic laity...who, feigning a love for the Church, lacking the firm protection of philosophy and theology, nay more, thoroughly imbued with the poisonous doctrines taught by the enemies of the Church, and lost to all sense of modesty, vaunt themselves as reformers of the Church.*<sup>5</sup>

In fact, what could be more typical of a reformer than to destroy proven methods, institutions filled with blessings of the Church, and pious practices approved by the most august acts of authority, on the pretense of freeing the Church from germs of liberalism that have supposedly slipped into Her, and over so many ruins establish the foundations of a new spiritual life based on an entirely different, "reformed" concept of the relations between grace and human free will? Deep down, as we have said, the whole objective of these efforts consists in a relaxing of the interior life.

Now, Leo XIII said,

*this only proves the necessity to a Christian of long-suffering not only in will but also in intellect. We would remind those persons of this truth who desire a kind of Christianity such as they themselves have devised, whose precepts should be very mild, much more indulgent towards human nature, and requiring little if any hardships to be borne. They do not properly understand the meaning of faith and Christian precepts. They do not see that the Cross meets us everywhere, the model of our life, the eternal standard of all who wish to follow Christ in reality and not merely in name.*<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Part III, ch. 3, p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, no. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Tametsi Futura Prospicientibus*, Nov. 1, 1900, no. 10, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_01111900\\_tametsi-futura-prospicientibus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01111900_tametsi-futura-prospicientibus_en.html)

Completing this thought, the same Pontiff says further: "Now the perfection of Christian virtue lies in that disposition of soul which dares all that is arduous or difficult."<sup>7</sup>

For his part, Pius XI wrote:

*In this regard we are not unmindful that some educators of youth, frightened at the present depravation of customs, thought that it would be indispensable to invent new systems of instruction and education. But we would like to make these men understand that it would not be possible to reap any advantages for society with this if they leave aside the methods and discipline flowing from the fountains of Christian wisdom, consecrated by the long experience of centuries and **the efficacy of which Aloysius Gonzaga experienced in himself** that is, the lively Faith, **the flight from seductions, moderation, and the fight against the appetites**, an active piety toward God and the Blessed Virgin, finally, a life frequently entertained and strengthened by heavenly nourishment.*<sup>8</sup>

An active and diligent interior fight against one's passions is always a "condition of sanctification and even salvation." The Holy Ghost says: "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. If thou give thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies."<sup>9</sup>

We cannot allow, therefore, this condescendence to take hold of Catholic Action. We well know that our statements will cause astonishment. Indeed, many of these persons, just like the modernists, make an impression because of a way of life in which even their private virtues contribute towards the diffusion of their errors. "They lead a life of the greatest activity, of assiduous and ardent application to every branch of learning, and that they possess, as a rule, a reputation for the strictest morality."<sup>10</sup> The ideas they propagate and the advice they give, however, are not good.

We did not want to end this chapter without making an observation we deem important. Another curious manifestation of the frivolous and sensual spirit of our times and the way it intermingles, in many mentalities, with religious principles and convictions and tends to produce a piety totally contaminated with laxity and love of comfort can be found in the concern to continuously raise up new or old devotions to this or that saint, to this or that perfection of God, to this or that episode in our

<sup>7</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Auspicato Concessum*, Sept. 17, 1882, no. 8, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_17091882\\_auspicato-concessum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_17091882_auspicato-concessum_en.html)

<sup>8</sup> Pius XI, Apostolic letter *Singulare Illud*, June 13, 1926. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>9</sup> Ecclus. 18:30-31.

<sup>10</sup> St. Pius X, Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, no. 3.

Redeemer's life, always attributing to this devotion the magical and, as it were, mechanical effect of solving all of the present religious problems. In the last century, Bishop Isoard, a French prelate, published words of ardent and profound analysis on this matter, showing that above all, God is pleased by "a contrite and humble heart," and that a sinner's penance is indispensable for gaining God's graces.

For his part, Pius XI complained in a strong allocution of the tyrannical impositions of many people who write to the Pope suggesting and asking him almost threateningly to acquiesce to save the Church by means of this or that new devotion. It was this profound feeling of horror of mortification that ended up generating the doctrine of the mechanical and magical action of the liturgy.



## Chapter 3

### The Doctrine of the Church

#### Liturgy and Mortification According to the Teaching of the Holy See

The highest respect we all owe to the eminent authority of the Holy See moves us to complete the preceding chapter with some refutations of the doctrine we have described, and which unfortunately circulates in certain milieus of Catholic Action. We excused ourselves from doctrinal considerations on the problem of grace and free will, a problem of restricted accessibility to the masses and depicted today by some theoreticians in terms so obviously contrary to the traditional doctrine of the Church, that any Catholic, as little versed as he might be in theological matters, will immediately perceive it.

Let us quote only, as documentation, some important papal texts that develop the thoughts contained in the letter *Magna Equidem* which proves that the sacred liturgy does not dispense with man's cooperation or with traditional means of asceticism, such as mortification, fleeing from occasions of sin, etc.:

*Saint St. Cyprian does not hesitate to affirm that "the Lord's sacrifice is not celebrated with legitimate sanctification, unless our oblation and sacrifice correspond to His passion" (Ephes. 6:3). For this reason, the Apostle admonishes us that "bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10), and buried together with Christ, and planted together in the likeness of His death (Cf. Rom. 6:4-5), we must not only **crucify our flesh** with the vices and concupiscences (Cf. Gal. 5:24), **"flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world"** (2 Pet. 1:4), but "that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:10) and being made partakers of His eternal priesthood we are to offer up "gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5:1)...*

10. But, the more perfectly that our oblation and sacrifice corresponds to the sacrifice of Our Lord, that is to say, the more perfectly we have **immolated our [self-]love and our desires** and have **crucified our flesh** by that mystic crucifixion of which the Apostle speaks, the more abundant fruits of that propitiation and expiation shall we receive for ourselves and for others.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, nos. 9-10.

In fact, we can never excuse ourselves from suffering. Saint Paul reminds us, *"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the Church."*<sup>2</sup>

Even more. Without the spirit of penance we will obtain nothing from God. Indeed, Pope Leo XIII expressly recommends that, together with the spirit of prayer, one should ask God for the spirit of penance, without which divine justice is not appeased:

*Our fatherly solicitude urges Us to implore of God, the Giver of all good gifts, not merely the spirit of prayer, but also that of holy penance for all the sons of the Church. And whilst We make this most earnest supplication, We exhort all and each one to the practice with equal fervour of both these virtues combined. Thus prayer fortifies the soul, makes it strong for noble endeavours, leads it up to divine things: penance enables us to overcome ourselves, especially our bodies—most inveterate enemies of reason and the evangelical law.*<sup>3</sup>

This is how the same Pontiff describes the life of penance of the saints:

*They governed and kept assiduously in subjection their minds and hearts and wills....Their unique desire was to advance in the science of God; nor had their actions any other object than the increase of His glory. They restrained most severely their passions, treated their bodies rudely and harshly, abstaining from even permitted pleasures through love of virtue. And therefore most deservedly could they have said with the Apostle Paul, "our conversation is in Heaven" (Phil. 3:20): hence the potent efficacy of their prayers in appeasing and in supplicating the Divine Majesty.*<sup>4</sup>

And finally, prayer, even liturgical prayer, when done unworthily can only provoke God's anger against the person who makes it:

*It is vain to hope that the blessing of heaven will descend abundantly upon us, when our homage to the Most High, instead of ascending in the odor of sweetness, puts into the hand of the Lord the scourges wherewith of old the Divine Redeemer drove the unworthy profaners from the Temple.*<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Col. 1:24.

<sup>3</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Octobri Mense*, Sept. 22, 1891, no. 11, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_22091891\\_octobri-mense\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_22091891_octobri-mense_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> St. Pius X, *Motu Proprio Tra le Sollecitudini*, Nov. 22, 1903 at [www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html](http://www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html)

It is good never to forget the command of the Holy Ghost: "*Do not offer wicked gifts, for such He will not receive.*"<sup>6</sup> Cain's sacrifice has, in this regard, a decisive eloquence.

The purpose of this book does not consist in refuting the errors of pseudo-liturgism, but only the consequences to be deduced from it in the field of Catholic Action. When we refer, therefore, to these errors, we do so only because it would be otherwise impossible to point out the true roots of the doctrinal disorders which, in regard to Catholic Action, can be noticed in some of our lay environments. Since, however, no error should ever be mentioned or described without its corresponding refutation, we thought it useful to add to this part of the book some briefly stated arguments that we hope will forewarn, against certain doctrinal innovations, souls who are docile to the supreme and decisive authority of the Holy See. It is quite obvious that a refutation based on arguments other than those of authority, could only be done in a work particularly focused on the subject and written by a specialist rather than a layman. However, if the argument of authority does not exhaust the matter, it does suffice at least to solve the problem. So we are certain that the quotes and reflections we will now transcribe are appropriate for the job.

Before going into the matter, we would like, however, to make crystal clear that, when we refer to "*pseudo-liturgism*" we have selected the expression purposely, so as to preserve from any censure some meritorious efforts, undertaken with the praiseworthy intention of increasing piety around the Sacred Liturgy.

We also set aside the problem of the "*dialogued Mass*" and of exclusive use of the Missal. This problem has nothing to do with this book directly, and transcends the realm of a layman's judgment. We do not want to abstain from emphasizing however, that the obvious exaggerations that certain "*pseudo-liturgists*" have yielded to in this realm, fool even a number of wary souls. In fact, the most serious evil of this tendency does not lie here, but rather in certain doctrines professed in a more or less veiled manner, regarding piety and the so-called "*passive priesthood*" of the laity. The latter is enormously exaggerated, deforming the teaching of the Church which, incidentally, recognizes such priesthood. Let us deal only with errors regarding piety, which are more closely linked with Catholic Action, though this matter is also above our competence.

## **Devotions Approved by the Church May Not Be Attacked**

---

<sup>6</sup> Ecclus. 35:14.

When the Holy See approves a practice of piety, it declares implicitly that the objectives aimed at by such practice are holy and that the means of which it consists are licit and adequate for its purpose. Consequently, the Church affirms that the use of such means is suitable to contribute towards the increase of piety and the sanctification of the faithful. It is not licit, therefore, for anyone to hold the contrary, alleging that the practice of such acts implies the acceptance of principles contrary to the Church's own and that they are radically inefficacious in facilitating the sanctification of souls.

The Holy Rosary and the Way of the Cross are devotions which have been approved countless times by Holy Church; they have been recommended by the Pontiffs, profusely endowed with indulgences, and incorporated to common piety in such a way that several associations have been established for their diffusion with all the blessings of the Church; many religious orders and congregations have as a point of honor and solemn obligation to propagate them; and the Code of Canon Law instructs bishops to stimulate devotion to the Holy Rosary among their clergy. By a decree of August 20, 1885 His Holiness Pope Leo XIII made obligatory the recitation of the Rosary during Holy Mass during the month of October.<sup>7</sup> Obviously, therefore, whoever does not render unto these devotions the high and respectful appreciation engendered by so many and so praiseworthy acts of the Church, revolts against the authority of the Holy See.

It would be entirely futile to allege that in our day and age these practices are antiquated. It is true that practices of piety as admirable as these may yet emerge; but their motives—from which the value of the Rosary and the Way of the Cross flow—are merged so profoundly with the Church's immutable doctrine and with the unchangeable characteristics of human psychology, that it would be erroneous to affirm that these practices will one day become obsolete.

Being cold toward devotions warmly recommended by the Church, burying in silence devotions of which the Church talks constantly, is proof that one does not think, act, or feel in union with the Church.

### **One Cannot Admit Contradictions in the Spirituality of the Various Religious Orders**

The same can be said in regard to the spirituality proper to each religious order or congregation. Each of the religious

---

<sup>7</sup>[Trans.: decree S.R.C. *Inter Plurimos*]

families existing in the Church has its special goals, its particular devotions, and its own way of life approved by the Holy See as irreprehensible and in accordance with Catholic doctrine in everything. Therefore, whoever rises up against a given religious order attacks the Church herself and revolts against the Holy See.

Thus, the animosity some people profess against the Society of Jesus is simply unbearable. This animosity is often based on arguments rehashed from criticism by either Freemasonry or the Protestants. The spirituality of the Society of Jesus is just as unassailable as that of any other religious order. Consequently, the "*spiritual treasures*," *Spiritual Exercises*, and examination of conscience several times a day may not be attacked by anyone, as they are spiritual resources of which souls can freely avail themselves when they see that by doing so they progress in virtue.

Even more unbearable is the odious attempt to throw one altar against another by forging alleged incompatibilities between the spiritualities of different orders. There are variances among them, and the Church is proud of these variances like "*a queen with a dress adorned with many colors*." But such variety never implied nor will it ever imply anything but a profound harmony like the one resulting from the variety of notes in a musical chord.

#### Religious orders and congregations

*dedicate themselves to the service of God, each one in its own way, and all of them try to obtain the greater glory of God and their neighbor's profit through their respective goals, and while using different works of charity and love for one's neighbor. This enormous variety of religious orders—like trees of different perfumes planted in the Lord's field—produces most varied fruits and all of them most abundant for the salvation of mankind. Certainly there is nothing more pleasing to the eye, or more beautiful, than the homogeneity and harmonious diversity of these institutions: all tend toward the same end and, nevertheless each possesses special works of zeal and activity, diverse from those of other institutions under some special point of view. It is a customary method of Divine Providence to respond to each new necessity of the Church with the creation and development of a new religious institution.*<sup>8</sup>

Because of this, we consider it abominable for a member of the faithful, in his legitimate preference for this or that religious order, to wish to set himself up in opposition to the others, finding no other outlet for his admiration for one except by diminishing others. To diminish one religious order is to diminish them all; it is to diminish the Catholic Church herself.

---

<sup>8</sup> Pius XI, Apostolic Letter *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, Mar. 19, 1924, AAS 16 (1924).

Undoubtedly, it is licit and even normal for the faithful to feel attracted, as a preference, to practice the spirituality of one of these orders. It would never be licit, however, for them to deviate from other paths, also very holy, souls oriented towards the spirituality of other orders. In the garden of the Holy Church of God, no one may hinder, without criminal injustice, our right to pick the flowers of sanctity in whichever flower bed the Holy Ghost calls us to.

Loving the Church filially and all the orders that exist in Her, we could not abstain, in this affectionate veneration, from attributing a particularly tender place to the Order of Saint Benedict. Because of the admirable wisdom of its rule and the extraordinary spiritual fruits it produced, produces and will always produce in the Church; because of its historical primacy in relation to all the religious orders of the West; because of the role the sons of Saint Benedict had in the formation of medieval society and culture, they occupy a chosen place in our heart, all the more so as we find in its ranks some of the best friends we have ever had. We are therefore filled with indignation when we hear the rumor that such errors can be identified or in any way affiliated with the spirit of Saint Benedict, on the pretext of the liturgy.

Not to love the liturgy, which is the voice of the praying Church, means at the very least to be suspect of heresy. It is an absurdity to believe that improprieties may arise from the effort developed by the Benedictine Order in favor of a more profound understanding of the liturgy and its exact place in the spiritual life of the faithful. Because of all this, we consider a calumny any identification that fortuitous and maybe nonexistent circumstances may suggest between the Benedictine spirit and the authentic liturgical spirit, on one hand, and on the other the modernist strategy and the "*hyper-liturgist*" exaggerations we have been fighting. In this regard the magnificent article written by the Most Reverend Lourenço Zeller, titular Bishop of Dorilea and Archabbot of the Benedictine Congregation of Brazil, published in *Legionário* on December 13, 1942, is perfectly explanatory. It is most important reading for those who wish orientation on this point.

As for the glorious and invincible Society of Jesus, on the occasion of their recent centenary, Pope Pius XII published an encyclical praising so highly the statutes and spirituality of this noble militia that we really do not know what remains of filial adhesion to the Holy See in those who, after reading it, persist in criticizing it. Referring to the *Spiritual Exercises*, Pius XI said that

*Saint Ignatius learned from the Mother of God herself how to fight the battles of the Lord. It was as if he received from her hands this perfect code—this is the name that in truth we can give it—that is the Spiritual Exercises, which every soldier of Christ should use. In the Exercises organized according to the method of St. Ignatius, everything is laid out with so much wisdom, everything is so strictly ordered, that if there is no resistance to divine grace, the Exercises renew man to his very depths and make him perfectly submissive to divine authority. We declare St. Ignatius of Loyola, heavenly patron of the Spiritual Exercises.*

***Although other methods of spiritual exercises are not lacking, as we have already said, it is nevertheless true that the method of Saint Ignatius possesses a true excellence, and that, above all because of the more secure hope it gives of solid and durable advantages, they are the object of the Holy See's more abundant approval.***<sup>9</sup>

In view of this affirmation, the alternative is clear: either Pius XI was affected with anthropocentric individualism, which is absurd, or the adversaries of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius are in declared opposition to the spirit of the Church in this vital subject.

---

<sup>9</sup> Pius XI, Letter *Meditantibus Noster*, Dec. 3, 1922. (Our emphasis.)





# **Part III**

## **Internal Problems of Catholic Action**



## Chapter 1

### Organization, Regulations, and Penalties

#### New Concepts on the Catholic Lay Movement

If we analyze in depth the criticisms made in certain circles of Catholic Action regarding the organization and methods of formation and apostolate of religious sodalities existing up to now, we will notice they can be divided in two groups. Some address extrinsic defects, which do not exist because of but rather in spite of the purposes and bylaws of the associations: a certain routine in the activities, a certain superficiality of formation, and so on. Obviously, many of these criticisms are often true and have nothing censurable when made by an authorized person and in accordance with the demands of ecclesiastical decorum. Other criticisms, however, address the very structure and purposes of the association and, by attacking precisely that which the authority approved they implicitly attack the authority itself. What is particularly dangerous about this second form of criticism is that it implies the affirmation that Catholic Action must carefully avoid identical "errors." Now, these "errors" are often nothing more than highly salutary precautions, with which the wisdom of the Church surrounded associations prior to Catholic Action, and which the latter should retain if it does not wish to die torpedoed by modernism.

#### a) Regarding Various Devotions

It is a grievous mistake to claim that associations founded to venerate a given saint, such as Our Lady, for example, run the risk of instilling a fragmentary and stingy vision of piety, clouding the "*Christ-centered*" character that every spiritual life must obviously have. Yet, some claim that Catholic Action should be less insistent than other associations regarding the cult of the saints.

The argument given at times, that in certain associations the devotion to the patron saint leaves the adorable figure of Our Lord in the shadows is worthless. All things, even the best, can be subject to wrong interpretation or abuse, not because of an intrinsic defect, but as a consequence of defects in those who use them. No one, for example, would be against venerating statues only because hillbillies in the back country break them when their prayers go unanswered. Obviously, Holy Church, by approving, blessing and recommending the founding of such associations in the

Code of Canon Law, in a thousand official acts of its Magisterium and government, and even recently in the Plenary Brazilian Council, foresaw abuses, and yet she did not retreat in her line of conduct precisely because of the reason we point out. Let us not fall into the utterly ridiculous position of claiming to be more "*Christ-centered*" than the Church, a new-fangled and unfortunate way of being "*more Catholic than the Pope*." Following this tune, we could end up by criticizing Our Lord Jesus Christ for having instituted the Holy Eucharist, which would become the object of so many sacrileges.

Contrary to the fraternities, Catholic Action does not exist only nor mainly for the veneration of a patron saint. But this does not prevent Catholic Action from having patron saints to whom its members can and should render most ardent, public and unabashed devotion, without thereby confusing Catholic Action with a fraternity.

Other criticisms frequently hurled at the associations address specifically their statutes, and particularly certain prescribed customs such as, for example, practicing acts of piety in common, periodically, etc. All coercion excluded, the practice of these acts was always praised by the Church for obvious reasons.

#### **b) Regarding Periodical Acts of Piety in Common**

In keeping with the divine promise, acts of piety practiced in common attract greater graces. On the other hand, the simultaneous presence of several persons, for the ostensive practice of these acts, serves as a mutual stimulus and edifies the public considerably. What a magnificent impression is caused in a parish, for example, when the associations of young men present themselves *en masse* at the Communion rail.

As for the periodicity of these acts, as long as it does not entail any violence to the rights of consciences, it bears the most fortunate results. In fact, it deepens the roots of salutary habits, which constitute a precious guarantee of perseverance and regularity in spiritual life. For all these reasons, no principle can invalidate these practices, most praiseworthy from all points of view. And we do not see why Catholic Action cannot adopt them. The Catholic University Youth of São Paulo adopted them from its foundation, and has always garnered, as a result, excellent fruits.

These reflections remind us of the factual case of a curious dialogue between a member of a religious order and a "*progressive*" member of Catholic Action. The latter maintained that subjection to obligatory acts in common, to a regulation of life, etc., meant a decrease of autonomy, and implicitly of human dignity. To which

the religious answered that, to be consistent, he should consider as unworthy slaves all the religious of the world, subject as they are to a rule of life as well as periodical acts of piety in virtue of Rules approved by Holy Church. This, indeed, would be the ultimate consequence of such principles.

**c) Regarding the Promotion of Intimate Sociability among Its Members and Having a Recreation Center**

Nor is it true that it is wrong for an association to have a center for recreational purposes, where its members get together in their leisure hours. The principle justifying this practice is based, in final analysis, on man's natural sociability. Philosophy tells us that the nature of man leads him to live in the company of his fellow men. The tendency to frequent an ambience in keeping with one's tastes, inclinations and ideas is inherent to sociability, at least for the vast majority of men. Any elementary sociology has this rule; to demonstrate it, it is sufficient to observe the motives inspiring the establishment of most profane associations of any kind. Conversely, if man does not frequent an ambience in accordance with his convictions, sociability leads him to adapt himself to the milieu in which he finds himself, assimilating, as much as possible, the way of thinking and feeling, or at least, interiorly establishing certain "*compromises*" whose ultimate consequence will be a complete adaptation. Paraphrasing Pascal, it could be said that the immense majority has an imperative inclination "*to conform one's ideas with the ambience when the ambience is not in accordance with one's ideas.*" Obligated by multiple necessities, domestic, economic, etc., to frequent the most varied ambiances, and to live most of their day in atmospheres more and more deeply infected with paganism, contemporary Catholics should not limit themselves to a merely defensive attitude; instead, they should proudly unfurl the standard of Christ everywhere. This is the "*apostolate in one's environment*" so insistently and vigorously preached by Pius XI. Only an absolutely naive person, for never having frequented certain professional or domestic circles of our times, or, because he never unfurled there, with sincere and courageous intrepidity, the standard of Christ, can ignore the more than human energy that such conduct requires. We know the actual case of a young man who had to resort to the use of physical force to keep his purity in an atmosphere which, in itself, would be harmless. Now, it is only human, natural and imperative that the enthusiasm worn out by the struggle and the energies exhausted in battle should be replenished by frequenting a good environment where souls can expand and recompose themselves in the shade of Holy Mother Church, where mutual edification can restore the strength of all.

It would be false to suppose that in so doing, Catholics turn away from the world and stop fulfilling their duty of apostolate. It is precisely so that they can better fulfill such duty, that these centers of relaxation and restoration of strength are organized.

*Salt must certainly be mingled with the mass which it is to preserve from corruption, but it must at the same time defend itself against the mass under pain of losing all savor and becoming of no use except to be thrown out and trampled under foot (Matt. 5:13).*<sup>1</sup>

This truth is so important that the Church, always wise, was not satisfied with giving her best approval to initiatives like this, but in a certain way took to the ultimate point her trust in the action of good environments and her fear of bad ones, when she removed completely from the sociability of the world those destined to the priestly militia. Canon Law even recommends that the bishop make his best effort to make sure that even secular priests will live together whenever possible. What is the reason for this measure except to protect priests from the dangers of bad or at least lukewarm environments? And if this precaution exists on behalf of souls so fervent and endowed with such a special grace of state, what about simple laymen?

Therefore, we not only understand that Catholic Action can, but also that it should use this splendid process of formation that no one can attack without rashness.

#### **d) Regarding Rules on Attire, Fashions, and the Like**

Likewise there is not the least basis for affirming that Catholic Action should not subject its members to special rules for dress, fashions, etc. The argument alleged on behalf of this rash innovation is that these rules are incompatible with human dignity, because they constitute an imposition. Certain individuals conclude, as a result, that contrary to the auxiliary associations, Catholic Action should strive for an intransigent abolition of these rules. If, in opposition, it is alleged that it behooves Catholic Action to excel by its example, they respond, depending on the interlocutor, with two different arguments. At times they claim that Catholic Action must adapt to modern customs lest it should lose its influence in the ambiances in which it works and thus render its apostolate impossible. Other times they affirm that rules of conduct are superfluous and even irritating; that Catholic Action should have its members spontaneously wear proper attire as a consequence of deep convictions instilled in

---

<sup>1</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Depuis le jour*, Sept. 8, 1899, no. 38, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113depu.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113depu.htm)

them but never through the action of merely exterior rules with only a coercive value. Hence, for them, the need to impose rules of modesty is a consequence of a failed formation. Analyzing, however, their first argument, we see that, on the contrary, these rules constitute a precious means of formation.

Saint Thomas clarifies this issue in a most luminous manner when he addresses, in the *Summa Theologica*, "*Whether it was useful for laws to be framed by men?*"

Let us examine the matter, leaving for another chapter the task of refuting the allegation that Catholic Action needs to capitulate before modern customs if it does not want to be barren. As for the usefulness and necessity of laws, the Angelic Doctor says:

*Objection 1. It would seem that it was not useful for laws to be framed by men. Because the purpose of every law is that man be made good thereby, as stated above (q.92, art.1). But men are more to be induced to be good willingly by means of admonitions, than against their will, by means of laws. Therefore there was no need to frame laws...*

*I answer that, As stated above (q.63, art.1; q.94, art.3), man has a natural aptitude for virtue; but the perfection of virtue must be acquired by man by means of some kind of training. Thus we observe that man is helped by industry in his necessities, for instance, in food and clothing. Certain beginnings of these he has from nature, viz. his reason and his hands; but he has not the full complement, as other animals have, to whom nature has given sufficiency of clothing and food.*

*Now it is difficult to see how man could suffice for himself in the matter of this training: since the perfection of virtue consists chiefly in withdrawing man from undue pleasures, to which above all man is inclined, and especially the young, who are more capable of being trained. Consequently a man needs to receive this training from another, whereby to arrive at the perfection of virtue. And as to those young people who are inclined to acts of virtue, by their good natural disposition, or by custom, or rather by the gift of God, paternal training suffices, which is by admonitions. But since some are found to be depraved, and prone to vice, and not easily amenable to words, it was necessary for such to be restrained from evil by force and fear, in order that, at least, they might desist from evil-doing, and leave others in peace, and that they themselves, by being habituated in this way, might be brought to do willingly what hitherto they did from fear, and thus become virtuous. Now this kind of training, which compels through fear of punishment, is the discipline of laws. Therefore in order that man might have peace and virtue, it was necessary for laws to be framed: for, as the Philosopher says (Polit. i, 2), "as man is the most noble of animals if he be perfect in virtue, so is he the lowest of all,*

*if he be severed from law and righteousness"; because man can use his reason to devise means of satisfying his lusts and evil passions, which other animals are unable to do.<sup>2</sup>*

Obviously, the internal law or regulations of Catholic Action or any other association differs from civil law—the subject dealt with above by the Angelic Doctor—in that one cannot flee from the power of civil law, whereas anyone can escape from the action of regulations by resigning from the sodality.

Nevertheless, love for the sodality's ideals and the spiritual benefits provided by it, fear of the dangers to which the soul exposes itself when removed from a sound and edifying environment, fear of displeasing persons that are respectable and worthy of esteem, all this concurs to make such a resignation difficult and at times very difficult, so that Saint Thomas's argument, in this concrete case, retains a decisive value. Furthermore, if the Church were to think otherwise, it would be the case to burn the Code of Canon Law and the rules of all religious orders.

It is a fact that true virtue comes from interior dispositions, and so any association, and especially Catholic Action, must above all form souls interiorly, giving them the knowledge and means to train the willpower necessary for this. The existence of rules containing prohibitions of ways of behavior and dressing, powerfully helps this formation, not only as a consequence of what Saint Thomas says about the educating value of the law but even more because it clarifies concrete questions in regard to which even the most zealous souls would have difficulty at times in finding the just medium between scrupulosity and laxity.

Saint Thomas Aquinas deals indirectly with this question, when he says:

*Objection 2. Further, As the Philosopher says (Ethic. v, 4), "men have recourse to a judge as to animate justice." But animate justice is better than inanimate justice, which contained in laws. Therefore it would have been better for the execution of justice to be entrusted to the decision of judges, than to frame laws in addition....*

*Reply to Objection 2. As the Philosopher says (Rhet. i, 1), "it is better that all things be regulated by law, than left to be decided by judges": and this for three reasons. First, because it is easier to find a few wise men competent to frame right laws, than to find the many who would be necessary to judge aright of each single case. Secondly, because those who make laws consider long beforehand what laws to make; whereas judgment on each single case has to be pronounced as soon as it arises: and*

---

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q.95, a.1 at [www.newadvent.org/summa/209501.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/summa/209501.htm)



*it is easier for man to see what is right, by taking many instances into consideration, than by considering one solitary fact. Thirdly, because lawgivers judge in the abstract and of future events; whereas those who sit in judgment of things present, towards which they are affected by love, hatred, or some kind of cupidity; wherefore their judgment is perverted.*

*Since then the animated justice of the judge is not found in every man, and since it can be deflected, therefore it was necessary, whenever possible, for the law to determine how to judge, and for very few matters to be left to the decision of men.<sup>3</sup>*

Indeed, it is by virtue of the same principle that we should prevent in Catholic Action and other religious associations, through laws and regulations, decisions of very delicate questions from being left to each associate, who would thus be at the same time both litigant and judge.

Let us give a concrete example. The Feminine Marian Federation of São Paulo felt a need to prescribe rules of dress for the Daughters of Mary. It was moved to do so above all by a desire to settle complex questions that arise, in practice, from the adoption of appropriate garb. At that time the director of the Federation was Fr. José Gaspar D'Afonseca e Silva, afterward "*ad maiora vocatus*."<sup>4</sup> The establishing of these rules, which it is useful to transcribe, greatly absorbed the attention of their illustrious author, which proves well that the problems thus solved were not within just anyone's reach. From this work resulted a document of rare equilibrium and great usefulness. The Daughters of Mary were thus endowed with a means of sanctification that was necessary not because of a lack of interior formation, but which, on the contrary, was imperative as the only means to concretely fulfill the generous impulses raised by the interior formation.

We transcribe here the learned and prudent document:

**A) FASHIONS**

a) *fashion must be in absolute accordance with Christian modesty, every exaggeration excluded, even in regard to make-up;*

b) *For the reception of the sacraments, as well as whenever the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, long sleeves as far as the wrists, are required.*

c) *in all other circumstances short sleeves are tolerated, so long as they reach the elbow;*

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> [Trans.: Fr. José Gaspar D'Afonseca e Silva was later made Archbishop of São Paulo, a position he still held in 1943 when *In Defense of Catholic Action* was first published.]

d) consequently, a Daughter of Mary will never be permitted to wear a sleeveless dress.

**B) ENTERTAINMENT**

It behooves a Daughter of Mary as much as possible to appear at social functions only in the company of her family.

a) Balls and dances: in the conditions mentioned above, family balls are tolerated; dancing will be exclusively permitted at these, respecting the intrinsic rules of modesty.

b) Beaches: the Daughter of Mary must, at all swimming beaches, preserve the utmost distinction, as required by the title she is honored with. She will select her clothing sensibly, and under no circumstances will she abandon her bathrobe when out of the water. In no other occasion is she permitted to neglect the use of socks or to use short ones.

c) Swimming pools: It is expressly forbidden for a Daughter of Mary to take part in mixed bathing in swimming pools.

d) Yacht or swimming clubs: Given the unavoidable promiscuity of yacht and swimming clubs it is forbidden for a Daughter of Mary to join their social ranks.

e) Carnivals: It is expressly forbidden for a Daughter of Mary to participate in carnival dances and carnival street groups, as well as to wear male attire or any disguise which may offend even slightly, the rules of decency.

**Only paragraph:** Male attire is always forbidden to a Daughter of Mary, in all circumstances. The prohibition of pajamas extends also to swimming beaches.

**Note:** If a Daughter of Mary happens to find herself in the impossibility of fulfilling to the letter any of these regulations, after consulting her own confessor, she should present the case to the Very Reverend Director of her Pious Union, who will give the solution he considers best, taking care, however, to communicate such solution to the Federation of her diocese. On the contrary, the fault committed will result in the immediate dismissal of the Daughter of Mary from the Pious Union.

The Council, having been informed of the dismissal of a Daughter of Mary, must implement the same with great elevation of spirit, not permitting in any way that uncharitable comments be made in its regard. The directors should make an effort to develop an intense apostolate toward the guilty one, so that she can be led to better disposition, and possibly bring her back to the Marian flock after a new period of novitiate.

\* \* \*

The usefulness of such rules is obvious. Indeed, the purpose of the law is not only to clarify, but also to put in order and to

punish. It is just, praiseworthy and explainable that the members of a given association choose not to position themselves at the extreme limits suggested or tolerated by morals, but rather decide to react against pagan surroundings not only through the exclusive use of what is licit, but even going so far as to dress only in accordance with the most severe and rigorous purity of customs. Now, it is only natural for such an organization to have the right to demand from its members the fulfillment of the rules which constitute its very purpose. Only an oversensitive temperament could feel hurt over such a thing.

Finally, only by accepting a magical or mechanical action of the sacred liturgy can we conceive that no member of such associations will ever transgress the modesty of dress or conduct. How can an association defend itself except by punishing the guilty member? How can a punishment be established without a prior law? Then the Holy See exaggerated along with us. The Sacred Congregation of the Council, in the pontificate of Pius XI decreed by document of January 12, 1930, that:

*I. Whenever an occasion presents itself parish priests and preachers should insist, reprimand, threaten and exhort the faithful, according to the words of Saint Paul, so that women will dress in a way that breathes modesty and be the adornment and safeguard of virtue;*

...

*III. Parents should forbid their daughters to participate in public exercises and contests of gymnastics and, if their daughters are forced to such a participation, they must take care that they dress in a way that respects decency and never tolerate immoral dress.*

...

*VII. Feminine associations, with the purpose of restraining with their advice, example and deeds, abuses contrary to Christian modesty in the way of dressing, and that propose for themselves the promotion of purity of customs and modesty of dress, should be established and propagated.*

...

*VIII. Women who dress without modesty should not be admitted in the pious associations for women; if members of such associations are found to be at fault in this point, they should be reprimanded, and if they do not repent, they should be dismissed."*

As we can see, the Holy See itself believes that the statutes of associations should deal with fashions, etc., and to such an extent, that fearing they would not do so, it issued a truly

supplementary regulation in the aforementioned Article VII. Now then, how can we expect these determinations to be efficacious without concrete and firm rules, which provide association directors with a uniform conduct and an evidently impartial means of action for every case that arises? Indeed, what else is there to assist a director with greater efficacy than an impersonal rule which he can apply impartially to every surfacing problem?

### **A Curious Contradiction**

We do not want to conclude the matter without an observation. Through a curious coincidence, those amidst us who defend with greatest exaltation the doctrine of Catholic Action's incorporation to the Hierarchy, are often the same who fight hardest against the adoption by Catholic Action of the fashion rules enforced in certain Pious Unions. Now, reality should be altogether different. Indeed, the higher the function, the more severe the obligations. It would be a profanation of the mandate received to hold that any consequence could arise from it except an even greater and more radical withdrawal from everything evil and a more perfect practice of everything good. But if there is a contradiction, it is explainable: both attitudes share in a desire to diminish all authority and all restraint.

#### **a) On Applying Penalties to Guilty Members**

Since we are dealing with these thorny matters, let us not eschew the arduous duty of showing to what extremes of coherence in error, some passions can lead. We already saw the strange doctrine being upheld that it is not proper for Catholic Action to dismiss, suspend, or apply any penalty whatsoever to its guilty members. In the aforementioned document we ascertained how the Sacred Congregation of the Council instructed religious associations in the duty of applying such punishments; and the Congregation does it in such terms that Catholic Action could never exempt itself from this obligation. **The Sacred Congregation of the Council indirectly condemned, therefore, the affirmation we now refute.** Yet, to this argument of authority, which of itself should suffice, it is not superfluous to add others. The repudiation of punishment stems directly from a denial of the legitimacy or advisability of the existence of rules and regulations for religious associations and Catholic Action. Having proven above the legitimacy of such rules, the consequences resulting from the contrary thesis obviously collapse. Let us limit ourselves, then, to adding to what has been said a few notions from plain common sense supported in passages from Scripture.

Incidentally, resorting to arguments immediately accessible to solid common sense is the only means to counter this and many other errors refuted in this book. Indeed, these errors attack so many points of Catholic doctrine and collide in so many ways with Saint Thomas Aquinas, that an in-depth refutation would require writing a treatise against each one.

### **Meekness and Persuasion before Anything Else**

Obviously, since the apostolate of the Church consists essentially in an action that strives at the same time to preach a doctrine and educate wills in the practice of this doctrine, every apostle, whether he be a bishop, priest or layman, should prefer above all else the processes that obtain a full enlightening of people's intellects and a spontaneous and profound adhesion of their will. This is the end to which the best efforts of any person dedicated to the apostolate must concur. To reach the greatest perfection in using all methods capable of attaining such a desirable goal, the zeal of the apostles should know how to multiply indefinitely the devices of their industry; and their patience should extend with immense amplitude the action of charity and gentleness towards all those with whom the apostolate is done.

For this reason, we deem it highly censurable that for some lay apostles, their method of education consists only in punitive or coercive means. One never sees in them a serious and persistent effort to explain, clarify or define certain truths in order to solidify profound convictions and structure vigorous principles. One never sees in them any effort to solve through a personal action all made of sweetness and charity, moral problems that sometimes arise in a dramatic way in souls rebellious to the apostle's action. "*A punishment, and that is the end of it,*" is what the simplistic pedagogy of many an apostle and educator is reduced to. No argument is necessary to prove to souls with common sense, how far removed these practices are from the Church's thinking and from the moral regime established with the law of grace in the most sweet atmosphere of the New Covenant. We would never be the ones to close ranks around these somber educating processes more appropriate to Jansenism than Catholicism.

This taciturn error has nothing in common with the doctrines we refute here, which sin precisely from the opposite extreme. We wanted, however, to declare explicitly our formal, categorical and resolute condemnation of a certain pedagogy and of certain methods of apostolate consisting exclusively of truculence, so that it may never be assumed that, because we condemn the opposite extreme, we advocate in any way, directly or indirectly, explicitly or

implicitly, the cause of this somber pedagogy, which has left adepts among us, but whose times, beyond doubt, have already passed.

In reality, however, and precisely because the times of this somber pedagogy have passed, the evil that is more in vogue today, more pressing and destructive in every environment where lay apostolate is done, is the extreme opposite. The new doctrines concerning Catholic Action have come to reinforce even more the highly accentuated exaggerations one could perceive in this line.

### **Is It a Lack of Charity to Punish?**

Even before the founding of Catholic Action among us, one could perceive in general, in regard to this subject the idea that the rules and statutes of religious associations should mention punishments, such as, for instance, suspensions, dismissals, etc., much, much more for merely intimidating purposes, than to be put into practice through vigorous disciplinary actions. The great and essential reason given was that punishments cause suffering, and it is not proper to the Catholic religion, so completely imbued with suavity and sweetness, to cause suffering to anyone; and besides, punishment does not present any concrete usefulness, because it irritates the rule-breaker against the Church; and when the punishment consists in dismissal, it casts him into the ocean of perdition, with no advantage for him. To these reasons the new errors in regard to Catholic Action added yet some more. Catholic Action should not list punishments in its rules so as not to turn away persons interested in enrolling, and because it is humiliating and contrary to human dignity that man be led by fear rather than love. If Catholic Action is endowed with irresistible methods of apostolate—and this in the most strict and literal sense of the word—why use punishments that will always be useless?

The consequences of these errors are being noticed in our circles more and more, and so it is imperative to eliminate them as soon as possible. There was a time when the simple wearing of the lapel pin of certain religious associations was a guarantee of an ardent and vigorous piety, of a most solid formation and of absolute security. Who would dare say the same today? The number of members has multiplied, but their formation did not grow proportionally. The elites were drowned and diluted in the pell-mell of trivial souls without any upsurge in the quest for perfection and heroism. The bad example, the constitution of an environment opposed to any encouragement towards total virtue, all this became increasingly frequent. And, unfortunately, in more than a few sodalities, nowadays, "*oves, boves...et serpentes*" (sheep, oxen...and serpents) live side by side in the same peace.

And all this, why? Simply because a false religious sentimentality often disarmed the lay leaders who, under the orders of ecclesiastical authority, should move to prevent "*Jerusalem transforming itself into a hut to store fruit.*"

### **The Real Panorama**

In order for us to understand well the necessity for having punishments listed in the bylaws of each branch of Catholic Action, as well as the need for these punishments to be applied in practice, above all we must convince ourselves profoundly that there are no irresistible methods of apostolate. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Model of the apostle, encountered the most cruel resistance; and it was from right next to Him, and after hearing for a long time His adorable instructions and contemplating His infinitely perfect examples, that a malefactor came forth, with a frozen heart and black soul, one who was no common criminal, but precisely the worst evil-doer in all History until the AntiChrist appears. We will develop this thesis more deeply in another chapter. For now, suffice it to remember that all of us will find souls hardened in error and in sin, who will show themselves opposed to all apostolate. If we were never to find souls like this, if we could have the certainty that our efforts would always and invariably meet with success, it is obvious that anyone dismissing an unworthy member from any religious sodality, and above all from Catholic Action, would act very badly. But reality, unfortunately, is very different. Unless we are filled with a refined pride, we cannot expect for ourselves a success that Our Lord did not obtain. Therefore, the scene we have before us is this: in any association or in Catholic Action, it is not surprising that once in a while a defector appear; but the rule-infringing associate, instead of leaving the association, remains in it with the bad doctrine and bad life he embraced. Having exhausted all persuasive means to return the wayward soul to the good path, one asks: what to do?

### **Systematic Impunity Is a Lack of Charity**

#### **a) Towards Society**

The same situation exists, on a permanent basis, in temporal society, and indeed, no one would think of suggesting that, in the name of Christian charity, the penitentiaries be opened and the penal code shredded. Thanks be to God, the time of romanticism is gone wherein the public's antipathies were usually directed against the sheriff, the public prosecutor, and the judge, while their empathies were turned completely toward the criminal. This

state of spirit produced dismal effects; and to it is due, in good measure, the generalized anarchy that causes so much alarm in our age. We do not know why it is that the vestiges of this erroneous mentality, frivolously sentimental and clearly anti-Catholic, banned as it is today from the spirit of all civil law, came to nest precisely in certain Catholic environments, at times producing as a consequence the maintenance within our organizations of an indolent ambience and methods, typically liberal, proscribed today in all nations including the democratic ones and from all properly structured private organizations with profane ends. Why did error seek refuge precisely in some circles where truth is fought for? The same reasons that lead us to see as reprehensible, absurd, and anarchical the absence in secular societies of effective punishments capable of inducing fear should lead us to recognize that they are also indispensable in religious sodalities. Nevertheless, this is not what is believed or practiced in certain sectors of our laity.

On the other hand, we should feel encouraged by the decisive example of Holy Church, which in her Code of Canon Law decrees, defines, and establishes most severe punishments, as she does when approving statutes, rules or constitutions of the various religious congregations or orders. If this is seen as necessary for the clergy and religious, what can one say about lay associations!

Saint Thomas Aquinas magnificently demonstrates the need for punishment. In the text we quote regarding the necessity of laws, the great Doctor implicitly manifests his opinion regarding the necessity of punishment by saying that one of the supports of the law is the prospect of due punishment for not fulfilling it. Frankly, we feel embarrassed having to demonstrate something so obvious.

Of course, if we take into consideration only the interest of the person to whom the punishment is destined, it would sometimes be better to delay the punishment indefinitely. There are souls that turn from good even more under the severe action of punishment. It is certain, therefore, that punishment should be applied with much discernment, avoiding the excesses both of never forgiving or never punishing. In this matter it is necessary, above all, to take into due account that every disciplinary transgression is foremost an attempt against the purposes of the association and, secondly, a violation of the collectivity's rights. When two values of such elevated nature are at stake, even certain legitimate individual interests should be sacrificed. If administration of punishment hardens some souls, they nevertheless suffer a just punishment that should in no way disarm the defense of the collectivity's rights. The Holy Ghost admirably described



the perverse conduct of souls who despise the just punishments they deserve, and He did so in a way that clearly indicates that such hardening is a consequence in face of which the judge must not systematically retreat. Thus, He says: *"Poverty and shame to him that refuseth instruction."*<sup>5</sup> And He adds:

*The ear that heareth the reproofs of life, shall abide in the midst of the wise. He that rejecteth instruction, despiseth his own soul: but he that yieldeth to reproof possesseth understanding. The fear of the Lord is the lesson of wisdom: and humility goeth before glory.*<sup>6</sup>

It is natural that *"a corrupt man loveth not one that reproveth him."*<sup>7</sup> Because of this, *"blessed is the man that is always fearful; but he that is hardened in mind, shall fall into evil."*<sup>8</sup> This one can not legitimately complain of the punishment he deserves, for *"a whip for a horse, and a snaffle for an ass, and a rod for the back of fools."*<sup>9</sup>

Besides, what advantage can a religious association gain from keeping such members in its midst? In what way can they be useful? The Holy Ghost says: *"A man that is an apostate, an unprofitable man, walketh with a perverse mouth."*<sup>10</sup> And He adds: *"With a wicked heart he deviseth evil, and at all times he soweth discord."*<sup>11</sup> His apostolate is barren: *"In the fruits of the wicked is trouble."*<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, it is worthwhile to mention, as we have already done, that there are souls opposed to the apostolate because of the profound malice in which they find themselves, as Wisdom says:

*For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins. For the Holy Spirit of discipline flees from the deceitful, and will withdraw himself from thoughts that are without understanding, and he shall not abide when iniquity cometh in.*<sup>13</sup>

Regarding these malicious souls, Wisdom further says:

*But the wicked with works and words have called it [death] to them: and esteeming it a friend have fallen away, and have made a*

---

<sup>5</sup> Prov. 13:18.

<sup>6</sup> Prov. 15:31-33. (Emphasis in the original.)

<sup>7</sup> Prov. 15:12.

<sup>8</sup> Prov. 28:14.

<sup>9</sup> Prov. 26:3.

<sup>10</sup> Prov. 6:12.

<sup>11</sup> Prov. 6:14.

<sup>12</sup> Prov. 15:6.

<sup>13</sup> Wis. 1:4-5.

*covenant with it: because they are worthy to be of the part thereof.*<sup>14</sup>

Scripture says of these souls: *"The heart of a fool is like a broken vessel, and no wisdom at all shall it hold."*<sup>15</sup> And also: *"As a house that is destroyed, so is wisdom to a fool: and the knowledge of the unwise is as words without sense."*<sup>16</sup> What is the purpose of keeping souls of this ilk at any price, with risk for the good and with general disedification and danger for discipline?

*He that teacheth a fool is like one that glueth a potsherd together...He speaketh with one that is asleep, who uttereth wisdom to a fool: and in the end of the discourse he saith: Who is this?*<sup>17</sup>

*Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you.*<sup>18</sup>

This invulnerability to apostolate is at times a punishment from God, and by keeping such a member in its midst, Catholic Action has within it a root of sin that only a great and rare miracle of grace can lead back to good will.

Sometimes this blindness is the action of the devil. Scripture refers more than once to this blindness:

*And if our gospel be also hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.*<sup>19</sup>

#### **b) For Those Who Merit Punishment**

The eventual evil that punishment may cause to certain souls is at times nothing more than a just and deserved chastisement whose imminence should not prejudice the defense of higher rights like those of the Church and of other members of the association. On the other hand, punishment is at times a salutary medicine to the guilty one himself. Thus, to spare from punishment would be robbing from the miscreant his access to the only way that could still lead him to amendment. Hence it is a true lack of charity to reduce the penal articles of the statutes to complete or almost complete inefficacy.

---

<sup>14</sup> Wis. 1:16.

<sup>15</sup> Eccclus. 21:17.

<sup>16</sup> Eccclus. 21:21.

<sup>17</sup> Eccclus. 22:7,9.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 7:6.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Cor. 4:3-4.

The prodigal son only returned to his father's home after being severely punished by the consequences of his action. In general, Divine Providence has brought back to the good path, by means of penance and punishment, the greatest sinners. This is true to such an extent, that we can rightly regard the greatest misfortunes as the most precious graces God grants a sinner. The just souls themselves only progress at the cost of spiritual purgation—at times frightful—of their defects. The pious soul who called suffering the eighth sacrament was most correct indeed.

So, when we establish as a rule the perpetual non-application of punishment, we should ask ourselves if we are not stealing from guilty souls a precious means of amendment. The answer cannot but be affirmative. *"He that spareth the rod hateth his son,"*<sup>20</sup> Scripture says. A president who systematically and without discernment, refuses to apply punishments deserved by his subjects, hates them. We recall a certain president who lamented the general decadence of his sodality. The rules were no longer observed, attendance was falling and the general attitude, day by day gave new signs of torpor. *"I recognize,"* he used to tell us, *"that some expulsions would remedy the evil, but—and he turned his eyes obliquely towards heaven, smiling with visible satisfaction—I am too good for that."* Too good? Is he who, out of laziness, witnesses the collapse of an initiative on the success of which the salvation of so many souls depends, too good? Without any hesitation I say that this person was harming the Church more than all the spiritist sects, Protestant churches and so on, functioning in that same place.

Actually, the effect of the punishment upon the delinquent is so precious that *"he that spareth the rod hateth his son"*<sup>21</sup> as Proverbs say. If Catholic Action spares its members punishments that are really indispensable, it hates them. On the contrary, *"he that loveth him correcteth him betimes."*<sup>22</sup> Why? *"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it away."*<sup>23</sup> Of a child...and of so many adults! There are souls who need punishment so that they not damn themselves eternally: *"Withhold not correction from a child: for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell."*<sup>24</sup> Now this is tantamount to saying: "if you do not beat him with the rod, you will expose his soul to hell." How right the Holy Ghost is, therefore, when He says: *"Open rebuke is*

---

<sup>20</sup> Prov. 13:24

<sup>21</sup> Prov. 13:24.

<sup>22</sup> Prov. 13:24.

<sup>23</sup> Prov. 22:15.

<sup>24</sup> Prov. 23:13-14.

*better than hidden love. Better are the wounds of a friend, than the deceitful kisses of an enemy.*"<sup>25</sup> So we should not fear to fail in charity when making resolute and effective use of punishment. Indeed, we have as a model God Himself, Who "*hath mercy, and teacheth, and correcteth, as a shepherd doth his flock.*"<sup>26</sup>

It would be ridiculous to argue in the opposite sense, using the most beautiful words of Ecclesiasticus: "*It is good that thou shouldst hold up the just, yea and from him withdraw not thy hand: for he that feareth God, neglecteth nothing.*"<sup>27</sup> Indeed, "*withdraw thy hand*" means not to help; and if, as we have just seen, punishment is an authentic help, he who does not punish when necessary "*withdraws his hand*" from the sinner and "*neglects him.*"

Others will argue that the severities of the Old Testament were repealed by the Law of Grace? Foolishness! Let us listen to Saint Paul:

*you have forgotten the consolation, which speaketh to you, as unto children, saying: "My son, neglect not the discipline of the Lord; neither be thou wearied whilst thou art rebuked by him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth; and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Persevere under discipline. God dealeth with you as with his sons; for what son is there, whom the father doth not correct? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are made partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons. Moreover we have had fathers of our flesh, for instructors, and we revered them: shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits, and live? And they indeed for a few days, according to their own pleasure, instructed us: but he, for our profit, that we might receive his sanctification. Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow: but afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice.*"<sup>28</sup>

Much has been said about the selfishness of teachers who, because they do not want to restrain their bad temper, punish their students excessively. On the day of the Last Judgment we will see that the number of souls who were lost because selfish teachers did not want to force on themselves the annoyance of punishing a student, is much greater than what is generally thought.

It is important to add that punishment is often the only way to make reparation to the principles one offended and to the authority one contested. To renounce it implies the introduction

---

<sup>25</sup> Prov. 27:5-6.

<sup>26</sup> Eccles. 18:13.

<sup>27</sup> Eccles. 7:19.

<sup>28</sup> Heb. 12:5-11.

into the sodality of an atmosphere of doctrinal indifferentism or laxity with most harmful consequences.

### c) Toward Those in Danger

It is also necessary to note that punishment offers the great advantage, out of fear, of turning hesitant members away from the seduction of evil which solicits them.

The Holy Ghost says *"them that sin reprove before all: that the rest also may have fear."*<sup>29</sup> And this is because *"when a pestilent man is punished, the little one will be wiser."*<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the foreboding of punishment is always very useful: *"by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil,"*<sup>31</sup> and punishments by Catholic Action or auxiliary associations are excellent means to make wayward members see that they deceive themselves if they think they are still pleasing to the Lord. Indeed, *"the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to decline from the ruin of death."*<sup>32</sup> Thus, when we spare the wicked the punishment they deserve, we unjustly expose to risk the perseverance of the lukewarm, of those who hesitate and who doubt, that is, the bruised reed and the smoking flax, that the Lord does not want to see completely broken or quenched, but that they recover new vigor and persevere. *"For because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the children of men commit evils without any fear."*<sup>33</sup>

### d) Toward the Good

Lastly, we fail with charity in yet another way when keeping inside Catholic Action or the auxiliary associations an atmosphere of perpetual impunity. To keep evil members inside an association is to transform it from a means of sanctification into one of perdition, by exposing to spiritual dangers those who took refuge in the shade of the association precisely to flee from them. The Holy Ghost makes a severe admonition in this regard: *"He that toucheth pitch, shall be defiled with it: and he that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride."*<sup>34</sup> The danger of evil friendships is always great: *"An unjust man allureth his friend: and leadeth him into a way that is not good."*<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> 1 Tim. 5:20.

<sup>30</sup> Prov. 21:11.

<sup>31</sup> Prov. 16:6.

<sup>32</sup> Prov. 14:27.

<sup>33</sup> Eccles. 8:11.

<sup>34</sup> Ecclus. 13:1.

<sup>35</sup> Prov. 16:29.

And because of this Scripture warns us *"Who will pity an enchanter struck by a serpent, or any that come near wild beasts? So is it with him that keepeth company with a wicked man, and is involved in his sins."*<sup>36</sup> Now, it is precisely this dangerous company of fools which, under the pretext of charity, would be imposed upon all the members of Catholic Action! In this way Saint Paul's observation that *"a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump"* is forgotten.<sup>37</sup> Let us not allow any *"root of bitterness springing up do hinder, and by it many be defiled"* to remain in the most fertile flowerbeds of the Church.<sup>38</sup> To do otherwise would be to sin against charity.

Besides, the most rudimentary prudence should lead us to an identical consequence. How many internal crises, how much disorder, how much division of souls it would be possible sometimes to prevent, if an astute blow would free certain atmospheres from individuals who should have already left spontaneously, as they are people of whom Scripture says: *"a man that is an apostate, an unprofitable man, walketh with a perverse mouth."*<sup>39</sup> These are the people who *"with a wicked heart he deviseth evil, and at all times he soweth discord."*<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, these discords are often brought about by the contact between different mentalities, one, orthodox, upright, the friend of Truth and Good, and another, heterodox, disguisedly in league with all errors, and disposed *a priori* to accept every complacency, retreat and compromise with evil. How can one avoid a clash in this case? Indeed, the presence of such individuals should bother those that are wholesome and whom they threaten to corrupt: *"The fear of the Lord hateth evil,"* and hates *"arrogance, and pride, and every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue."*<sup>41</sup> *"If the wolf shall at any time have fellowship with the lamb, so the sinner with the just."*<sup>42</sup> In such cases, any effort toward concord will be in vain: they will end, inevitably, in the defeat of the representatives of the good mentality, if the sodality is not delivered from the influence of the evil ones.

## **Punishment Does Not Deprive Catholic Action of Useful Auxiliaries**

---

<sup>36</sup> Ecclus. 12:13.

<sup>37</sup> Gal. 5:9.

<sup>38</sup> Heb. 12:15.

<sup>39</sup> Prov. 6:12.

<sup>40</sup> Prov. 6:14.

<sup>41</sup> Prov. 8:13.

<sup>42</sup> Ecclus. 13:21.

Furthermore, what advantage can Catholic Action expect from the cooperation of such members in its work? They will always render the service of an inconsistent instruction or an incomplete apostolate: *"As a lame man hath fair legs in vain: so a parable is unseemly in the mouth of fools."*<sup>43</sup>

It will be useless to object that, if elements foreign to Catholic Action perceive that it is organized with so much discipline they will be frightened and will not join. The rigor of the law does not even frighten those with a simple *"initium sapientiae,"* let alone those who have wisdom. For this reason, Saint Benedict, a profound and perhaps inspired legislator, thought to make the monastic rule he composed attractive by inscribing on its first page this invitation: *"Come, O sons, listen to me and I will teach you the fear of the Lord."*

It is, consequently, most appropriate to fear a lack of energy: *"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, BOTH are abominable before God."*<sup>44</sup> And, certainly, *"it is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to decline from the truth of judgment."*<sup>45</sup>

How right was Saint Ignatius when he said that both the day of admission...and the day of expulsion of an individual from the Society of Jesus were, for him, days of joy.

### **Nor Does It Harm the Ambience of Catholic Action**

One could argue that fear of punishment might fill any environment with shadows; that my statements are such as to create an atmosphere of apprehension and fear, of melancholy and anxious expectancy, singularly out of step with the enthusiastic joviality and the trusting and enterprising spirit that should prevail in Catholic Action. We do not agree with this opinion. Holy fear is the door through which one must pass to arrive at wisdom.<sup>46</sup> This is the magnificent reward promised to those who cross through this severe threshold:

*If wisdom shall enter into thy heart,  
and knowledge please thy soul:  
Counsel shall keep thee,  
and prudence shall preserve thee,  
that thou mayest be delivered from the evil way,  
and from the man that speaketh perverse things:  
Who leave the right way,*

---

<sup>43</sup> Prov. 26:7.

<sup>44</sup> Prov. 17:15. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>45</sup> Prov. 18:5.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Prov. 1:7.

*and walk by dark ways:  
Who are glad when they have done evil,  
and rejoice in most wicked things:  
Whose ways are perverse, and their steps infamous.*<sup>47</sup>

Ecclesiasticus is most right, therefore, when it says that

*The fear of the Lord is honor, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days.*<sup>48</sup>

*The fear of the Lord is the religiousness of knowledge. Religiousness shall keep and justify the heart, it shall give joy and gladness. It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed. To fear God is the fullness of wisdom.*<sup>49</sup>

*The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation.*<sup>50</sup>

*How great is he that findeth wisdom and knowledge! but there is none above him that feareth the Lord. The fear of God hath set itself above all things: Blessed is the man, to whom it is given to have the fear of God: he that holdeth it, to whom shall he be likened? The fear of God is the beginning of his love: and the beginning of faith is to be fast joined unto it.*<sup>51</sup>

*The fear of the Lord is like a paradise of blessing, and they have covered it above all glory.*<sup>52</sup>

One understands perfectly well, therefore, why Saint Paul wrote: "*As you have always obeyed me, not as in my presence only, but more now in my absence), with fear and trembling work out your salvation.*"<sup>53</sup> And that in the Epistle to the Hebrews he should say, "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,*" emphasizing, in this way, the holy fear that should constantly inspire.<sup>54</sup> The Apostle insisted more than once on this thought: "*Therefore receiving an immoveable kingdom, we have grace; whereby let us serve, pleasing God, with fear and reverence. For our God is a consuming fire.*"<sup>55</sup> And writing to the Romans he develops the same thought, referring simultaneously to God's love and severity:

---

<sup>47</sup> Prov. 2:10-15.

<sup>48</sup> Ecclus. 1:11-12.

<sup>49</sup> Ecclus. 1:17-20.

<sup>50</sup> Ecclus. 1:22.

<sup>51</sup> Ecclus. 25:13-16.

<sup>52</sup> Ecclus. 40:28.

<sup>53</sup> Phil. 2:12.

<sup>54</sup> Heb. 10:31.

<sup>55</sup> Heb. 12:28-29.



*For if God hath not spared the natural branches, fear lest perhaps he also spare not thee. See then the goodness and the severity of God: towards them indeed that are fallen, the severity; but towards thee the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*<sup>56</sup>

Also in the Apocalypse we find the repetition of what the Holy Ghost had said in the Old Testament: "*Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and magnify Thy name?*"<sup>57</sup>

The satisfaction with which Saint Paul praises the Corinthians for "*their zeal*" in punishing the offenses made to the Church, is evident for he recognized the obvious advantages of this disposition for the church of Corinth.<sup>58</sup>

Also in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul showed how necessary he deemed it for one to act severely:

*Behold, this is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word stand. I have told before, and foretell, as present, and now absent, to them that sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again, I will not spare. Do you seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me, who towards you is not weak, but is mighty in you?*<sup>59</sup>

Saint Paul says of temporal authority: "*he is God's minister to thee, for good. But if thou do that which is evil, fear: for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.*"<sup>60</sup> Now, in this case, what is said so adroitly of the temporal power can be understood also in regard to the spiritual power and even of its least representative agents, such as presidents of religious sodalities. And how ardently Saint Paul performed that avenging function of the spiritual power! Let us listen to him addressing the Corinthians:

*As if I would not come to you, so some are puffed up. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will: and will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power. What will you? Shall I come to you with a rod; or in charity, and in the spirit of meekness?*<sup>61</sup>

And furthermore:

---

<sup>56</sup> Rom. 11:21-22. (Emphasis in the original.)

<sup>57</sup> Apoc. 15:4.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-11.

<sup>59</sup> 2 Cor. 13:1-3.

<sup>60</sup> Rom. 13:4.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Cor. 4:18-21.

*It is absolutely heard, that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as the like is not among the heathens; that one should have his father's wife. And you are puffed up; and have not rather mourned, that he might be taken away from among you, that hath done this deed. I indeed, absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, him that hath so done, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, you being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of Our Lord Jesus; to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump?*<sup>62</sup>

*I wrote to you in an epistle, not to keep company with fornicators. I mean not with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or the extortioners, or the servers of idols; otherwise you must needs go out of this world. But now I have written to you, not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or a server of idols, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such a one, not so much as to eat. For what have I to do to judge them that are without? Do not you judge them that are within? For them that are without, God will judge. Put away the evil one from among yourselves.*<sup>63</sup>

Passages of Saint Paul could be cited in even greater number. Let us retain only a few: *"For the rest, brethren, pray for us, that the word of God may run, and may be glorified, even as among you; and that we may be delivered from importunate and evil men; for all men have not faith."*<sup>64</sup> And in the same Epistle the Apostle adds:

*And we charge you, brethren, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly, and not according to the tradition which they have received of us.*<sup>65</sup>

And further ahead:

*But you, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed: Yet do not esteem him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*<sup>66</sup>

## **Let Us Avoid Any Kind of One-sidedness**

---

<sup>62</sup> 1 Cor. 5:1-6.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Cor. 5:9-13.

<sup>64</sup> 2 Thess. 3:1-2.

<sup>65</sup> 2 Thess. 3:6.

<sup>66</sup> 2 Thess. 3:13-15.

While advocating such austere principles, we would never want to be one-sided. God forbid that we forget evangelical meekness! The Holy Ghost Himself sets limits to the action of justice, when He warns in the Old Testament: "*Chastise thy son, despair not: but to the killing of him set not thy soul.*"<sup>67</sup>

But if we do not want to forget the limits outside of which justice would be hateful, so also God forbid we should forget the limits outside of which tolerance would be no less hateful. Does perfection not lie in the observance of both limits?

How difficult is this balance between kindness and fidelity to the law: "*Many men are called merciful: but who shall find a faithful man?*"<sup>68</sup>

Holy Mother Church, always faithful to revealed doctrine, consecrated the same principles in her legislation. In this line, the situation in which excommunicates "*vitandus*" find themselves, is typical. Besides being deprived of spiritual goods as are all excommunicated persons, they must be avoided by the faithful even in worldly affairs, conversations, greetings, etc., excepted only such as would be indispensable, as well as employees, relatives and next of kin.<sup>69</sup> For the purpose of seeing the situation of horror in which the Church throws the excommunicate "*vitandus*," note the following: if an individual who has incurred this punishment, enters a church where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is being celebrated, the celebrant should stop until the excommunicate is expelled from the place. But if it is not possible to interrupt the Sacrifice, in case he has not reached the Canon or the Consecration, and if he has consecrated, he should continue the Mass until the second ablution, finishing the last prayers in some other decent place.<sup>70</sup>

Is it not because of the aforementioned unfaithfulness to the obligation of justice, so frequent nowadays, that to many associations and sectors of Catholic Action can be applied this description:

---

<sup>67</sup> Prov. 19:18.

<sup>68</sup> Prov. 20:6.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Can. 2257.

<sup>70</sup> Such is the wise teaching of Vermeersh-Creusen, in his *Epitome Juris Canonici*, vol. III, no. 469 - 1:

*"The excommunicate 'vitandus' should be expelled, if he choose to assist passively or actively in the divine office, except the preaching of the divine word. - If he cannot be expelled, the office should cease as long as this can be done without grave inconvenience" (c. 2259).*

*"If the 'vitandus' does not want to leave or cannot be expelled, the priest should interrupt the Mass, so long as he has not begun the Canon; if he has already begun the Canon but not the Consecration, he may continue but should not do so; after the Consecration, he should continue until the second ablution and then finish the rest of the office in a decent place contiguous to the church. The other assistants, with the exception of the minister, should retire as soon as the insistence of the 'vitandus' in remaining present has become manifest."*

*I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down?*<sup>71</sup>

Oh! The fallen stone wall which no longer defends the field against the sowing of the "*inimicus homo!*" Oh! the nettles and thorns which should be uprooted, but that flourish suffocating the wheat and the flowers! If at least we could say, as Scripture does immediately afterwards: "*When I had seen, I laid it up in my heart, and by the example I received instruction.*"<sup>72</sup> If at least in this way we would understand that "*the rod and reproof give wisdom: but the child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame.*"<sup>73</sup>

When confronted with the arrogance and rebelliousness of a sinner, who boasts of his sin, the natural and spontaneous attitude of any noble and upright soul is energetic. Scripture says of the just man that his "*mouth shall meditate truth,*" in other words, he will not remain silent or fade, but rather his "*lips shall hate wickedness.*"<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, in Proverbs, the just man says, "*the fear of the Lord hateth evil: I hate arrogance, and pride, and every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue.*"<sup>75</sup>

Because of this, in dealing with enemies of the Church, and foremost internal ones, without ever violating charity, "*a wise man is strong: and a knowing man, stout and valiant.*"<sup>76</sup>

On the contrary, what a painful impression is caused by certain "strategic retreats" of the good, retreats that are almost always less strategic than what is imagined: "*A just man falling down before the wicked, is as a fountain troubled with the foot, and a corrupted spring.*"<sup>77</sup>

In this way they scandalously invert the roles, for according to God's designs, "*the wicked man fleeth... but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread.*"<sup>78</sup>

What excellent apostolate would be done if only the designs of God were followed! "*When the wicked... perish, the just shall be*

---

<sup>71</sup> Prov. 24:30-31.

<sup>72</sup> Prov. 24:32.

<sup>73</sup> Prov. 29:15.

<sup>74</sup> Prov. 8:7.

<sup>75</sup> Prov. 8:13.

<sup>76</sup> Prov. 24:5.

<sup>77</sup> Prov. 25:26.

<sup>78</sup> Prov. 28:1.

multiplied."<sup>79</sup> And, on the contrary, "when the wicked are multiplied, crimes shall be multiplied."<sup>80</sup>

It is not in vain, therefore, that when all other resources are lovingly exhausted, the wise leader should "scatter the wicked and bring over them the wheel."<sup>81</sup> He who persists by actions or words in transgressing the law of God or the rules of Catholic Action, deep down mocks authority. And Scripture says: "Cast out the scoffer, and contention shall go out with him, and quarrels and reproaches shall cease."<sup>82</sup>

Let us conclude, then, affirming together with the angelic and sweet Pope Pius X that he who fails in his duty to warn or punish his neighbor, far from showing true charity, shows that he possesses only a caricature thereof, namely sentimentalism; because the transgression of this duty is an offense to God and to one's neighbor: "Whenever I hear anything of you displeasing to God and unbecoming to yourselves, and fail to admonish you, I do not fear God nor love you as I ought."<sup>83</sup>

The illustrious Bishop Antonio Joaquim de Melo, one of the greatest shepherds Brazil has ever seen, made this remarkable affirmation, with the full authority of his great name: "the mercy of God has sent more souls to hell than His justice." In other words, the great prelate stated that the rash hope of salvation damns a greater number of souls than the excessive fear of God's justice. It is likewise unquestionable that excessive benignity in applying punishment, as observed now in many religious associations, and the complete lack of it in certain sectors of Catholic Action, has thinned out the ranks of the children of light much more than the inconsiderate and perhaps excessively vigorous actions eventually carried out.

### **The Spirit of "Masonified" Fraternities**

During a conversation with a person of preponderant and even decisive influence in certain circles of Catholic Action, she told us that in five years she had never excluded anyone, no matter how removed, from the sector under her direction. When someone completely ceased showing up, her card would be transferred to a special drawer, from which it would be easily returned to the file of active members whenever she reappeared, be it five, ten or

---

<sup>79</sup> Prov. 28:28.

<sup>80</sup> Prov. 29:16.

<sup>81</sup> Prov. 20:26.

<sup>82</sup> Prov. 22:10.

<sup>83</sup> St. Pius X, *Encyclical Communium Rerum*, Apr. 21, 1909, no. 26, at

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_21041909\\_communium-rerum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_21041909_communium-rerum_en.html)

twenty years later. And this without the slightest novitiate, examination or act of penance.

This fact reminds us of the most authentic case of an old confraternity in which a pious lady once registered her 9-year old son, to fulfill a promise. After enrollment the young member never reappeared. He became a man, lost his faith, and is today an old man advanced in years. This person relates with obvious hilarity, how during all this time he never failed to receive invitations to all of the confraternity's events. He will probably continue to receive them for some years after his death. Readers who have not been forced by romanticism to completely forsake their common sense, will understand well how this procedure of the confraternity drags the Church to the lowest possible degree of discredit. This is a curious point of convergence, to be added to so many others, showing that under the guise of innovations in Catholic Action, what is really intended is the restoration, in all their spirit, of the errors of "*masonified*" fraternities of the time of Bishop Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira. We do not deny that this insistent invitation **might** have done good to the soul thus called upon. But is it worthwhile to harm the Church's prestige, which involves the salvation of thousands of souls, in exchange for the minute probability of bringing this wayward soul back to the life of grace? Who does not perceive that this thought can be upheld only by a person whose common sense has been smothered?

"*Time Jesum transeuntem et non revertentem,*" Abbot Chautard reminds us.<sup>84</sup> How salutary is the fear that Jesus might not return having once knocked at a heart's door! And how these rancid practices vilify the call of Jesus!

### **Punishment Is a Harsh Necessity**

If such reasoning were not to prevail one could argue that Holy Mother Church should strike all penal chapters from her Code of Canon Law and that the Holy See, true "*Mater misericordiae*" failed in charity when it fulminated several modernist leaders with the tremendous punishment of excommunication "*vitandus*." Certainly, being a Mother, the Church will always strive to govern her children preferably with the law of love, as in this law she finds the best fecundity of her apostolate.

Saint Francis de Sales was right when saying that "*more flies are caught with a spoonful of honey than with a barrel of vinegar*." It would be a blasphemy to believe that the holy Doctor

---

<sup>84</sup> "Dread the passage of Jesus, for he does not return."

was thus recommending some kind of liberalism. Indeed, the Holy Ghost warns that *"dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment. Wisdom and glory are more precious than a small and short-lived folly."*<sup>85</sup> We want mercy yes, a lot of it and always; but we should not forget that mercy and justice must never be without each other.

---

<sup>85</sup> Eccles. 10:1.

## Chapter 2

### Admission of New Members

If we consider the ideas fashionable in certain circles of Catholic Action on what criterion to use when recruiting new members, we will find also there a disastrous effect of the doctrines on the magical action of liturgical participation and the grace of state in Catholic Action.

#### Tumultuous Recruiting

We know of a certain member of Catholic Action who works in an ambience massively hostile to the Church and who was asked by a "zealot" why he would not found a section of Catholic Action there. The vigor with which the interpellation was made and the farfetchedness of the whole idea, led him to believe that his interlocutor ignored entirely the situation in the ambience in question. The latter, however, hastened to correct this impression by giving a most detailed description of the place's peculiarities. He expressed surprise at the idea. So his interlocutor said: *"You don't know what Catholic Action is! Let it be filled with Free Masons and anyone else of the same kind, and in a short while they will all be converted."*

The words of the Holy Ghost are thus forgotten:

*Bring not every man into thy house: for many are the snares of the deceitful. For as corrupted bowels send forth stinking breath...so also is the heart of the proud, and as a spy that looketh on the fall of his neighbor. For he lieth in wait and turneth good into evil, and on the elect he will lay a blot. Of one spark cometh a great fire, and of one deceitful man much blood: and a sinful man lieth in wait for blood. Take heed to thyself of a mischievous man, for he worketh evils: lest he bring upon thee reproach for ever. Receive a stranger in, and he shall overthrow thee with a whirlwind, and shall turn thee out of thy own.<sup>1</sup>*

And the Holy Ghost adds:

*Never trust thy enemy: for as a brass pot his wickedness rusteth: Though he humble himself and go crouching, yet take good heed and beware of him. Set him not by thee, neither let him sit*

---

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. 11:31-36.



*on thy right hand, lest he turn into thy place, and seek to take thy seat: and at the last thou acknowledge my words, and be pricked with my sayings.*<sup>2</sup>

There is much talk about apostolate of infiltration. Does it not occur to anyone that our enemies have been doing this for centuries? The illustrious Bishop Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira published a booklet during the reign of Pius IX in which he noted that certain adversaries of the Church spent a long time receiving Holy Communion daily from the hands of the Pontiff, in order to gain his confidence.

Think of the very serious responsibility, from every viewpoint, of those who advocate the admission of members *en masse* into Catholic Action. One can apply the warning of the Apostle to those who recruit collaborators for the Hierarchy, in such a tumultuous manner: *"Impose not hands lightly upon any man, neither be partaker of other men's sins."*<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, presented with seriousness, and seemingly inexplicable unless considered together with the liturgical automatism, this erroneous principle gives the measure of the criterion with which many people intend to practice Catholic Action. This error is repeated with increasing frequency in many study workshops. From it was born the most dangerous doctrine that any person whatsoever should be received into Catholic Action and allowed to make the promise shortly thereafter; the person starts the trial period when he wants and makes the promise three months later; and immediately after the promise, by the marvelous action of the acquired mandate and the liturgical magic, the newcomers will be transformed into excellent members. In other words, just like the philosopher's stone, Catholic Action supposedly has the rare gift of turning into gold anything approaching it. As we can see, it is always the same automatism producing its logical consequences.

### **Diminishes the Dignity of Catholic Action**

It would be superfluous to develop an exhaustive argumentation against this doctrine. We will just say a few quick words about the matter.

As a preliminary thought, let us remember the contradiction in which some partisans of the mandate fall when espousing this strange doctrine. They wish to confer without discernment the mandate of the Church on elements regarding whom there often is

---

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. 12:10-12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. 5:22.

every reason in the world to suppose that under a thin layer of Faith, they keep the heavy inheritance of a long past lived outside the Church. This is truly to carelessly waste the gift of God. It is to forget Our Lord's counsel, that pearls should not be thrown to the unworthy, "*lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you.*"<sup>4</sup>

The learned Pope Leo XIII stated in this regard a principle that we should in no way forget: "*It is clear that the more important, complex and difficult an office is the longer and more careful should be the preparation undergone by those who are called to fill it.*"<sup>5</sup>

### **Is Ineffective**

It would be mistaken to pretend that the need for a quick development of Catholic Action authorizes such simplified procedures. Spiritual life imposes, as a condition for perseverance, the practice of duties that are sometimes heroic; and no one can know what degree of fortitude will be demonstrated by randomly recruited elements when they have to undergo the "*test of fire*" of interior life. Besides, what concrete results will we achieve by recruiting *en masse* when the same individuals who recommend this are opposed to Catholic Action expelling or imposing penalties on anyone?

One has the clear impression that this whole set of precepts is so devoid of any sense that it could not be any worse had it been designed with the calculated aim of sinking the Catholic movement.

### **Particularly in Brazil**

As we shall see further on, if Catholic Action wants to be fruitful, it should be a movement of elites. Understandably, the fascination of great mass movements can give illusions to Catholic leaders in some countries. In Brazil, however, the quickest analysis of the facts shows that it is not the masses we need, but well-formed, combative and disciplined elites, who at the proper moment know how to give the entire Catholic laity a sure orientation, and one that is really according to the intentions of ecclesiastical authority. Several countries paid dearly for their ignorance of this principle and have only remembered to form elites under the fire of persecution. Let us not act like them: let us know how to prevent so that tomorrow we will not have to remedy.

---

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 7:6.

<sup>5</sup> Leo XIII, *Depuis le Jour*, no. 5.

What, then, should be the line of conduct to be followed by Catholic Action? We summarize it in the following principles:

### **How Should Catholic Action Recruit New Members?**

1. The apostolate of Catholic Action should address all men without distinction, however distant from the Church they may be, trying to make Catholic doctrine known to everyone. The broader the scope of its activity, the more perfect it will be. The voice of Catholic Action should be heard incessantly through the radio, press and all other means, following the Apostle's counsel: *"Preach the word: be instant in season and out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine";*<sup>6</sup>

2. Reading Sacred Scripture, or observing directly souls far removed from God, one can see that some have a hardness which makes them deaf to any apostolate. This deafness goes so far that at times it is closed to the greatest miracles. We already talked about this in the preceding chapter. Others, on the contrary are receptive and sensitive, and a simple call is enough sometimes for them to follow Jesus Christ, taking His cross on their shoulders, leaving all things behind and walking in the Master's footsteps;

3. While occasionally the most sensitive souls can be found among the greatest sinners - which, by the way, only happens through the extraordinary action of grace - this is not the general rule, and theology teaches us that extreme evil makes the soul numb, hard, and almost absolutely adverse to the action of grace: *"deep calleth on deep,"* says Scripture;<sup>7</sup>

4. On the other hand, persons with a more disciplined and moral life are the ones normally disposed to climb higher, because correspondence to a grace always predisposes one to correspond to even greater graces;

5. As a rule, therefore, Catholic Action should recruit its future members in wholesome environments and most particularly among members of religious associations. While a prudent and judicious ecclesiastical assistant or a very experienced layman could make one or another exception, by discerning the hidden work of grace in a specific soul called to make a single leap from extreme impiety to extreme love, it would be rash and even harmful to make gravely wayward people into normal recruits of Catholic Action.

6. Such exceptions should be the exclusive prerogative of souls with special discernment, for otherwise Catholic Action would

---

<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. 4:2.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. 41:8.

expose itself to a variety of risky adventures and to the censure of all judicious souls.

### **Masses or Elites?**

A problem of truly fundamental importance is to be found here. Is Catholic Action a movement of the masses or one of elites? The Holy Pontiffs have insisted so frequently on the idea that it should be a movement of elites that no one dares to contest them. This notwithstanding, some commentators opt for a solution that, without clashing with the papal instructions head-on, is nevertheless opposed to them.

They maintain that Catholic Action should be simultaneously a movement of masses and elites. In other words, that together with the choice elements, people of little formation should be accepted as full-fledged members, with formal promise and all, so they would be gradually influenced and transformed by the elite.

In order to better apprehend the error contained in this seemingly logical idea, we must clarify well the terms of the problem. MASS denotes a great number of people, and, at least in theory, we should accept the possibility of the existence of elites so numerous as to constitute a multitude. Thus, it certainly would be ideal if Catholic Action were composed of a countless multitude of really well formed people, of first rate individuals in the Catholic Church. In this sense we gladly concede that in the future, Catholic Action could become at the same time a mass movement and one of elites. It is evident, however, that in this context, the word "*mass*" has to be understood in a much narrower sense than it usually is.

### **A Fundamental Alternative**

Nevertheless, it is not always possible to achieve such brilliant results, nor is such a fortunate situation attained in the first few years of work. No matter how virtuous and wise the ecclesiastical assistants, leaders and activists may be they will often find people's hearts closed to the apostolate. In this regard let us not deceive ourselves with any apostolate romanticism by imagining that Catholic Action has a magic wand that will open all hearts without fail. No matter how good an apostle we may be, we will never be able to match Our Lord; and yet, how many hearts closed themselves to His voice! How many closed themselves to the voice of the Apostles and the innumerable saints that the Church has produced! Every day experience shows us what hagiography also teaches: there are persons, families, social

classes and at times entire cities that remain deaf to God's voice.

The Savior Himself said:

*For God sent not His Son into the world, to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him. He that believeth in Him is not judged. But he that doth not believe, is already judged: because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment: because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light: for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God.*<sup>8</sup>

Further on, the Lord continues saying of Himself: "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth: and no man receiveth his testimony."<sup>9</sup>

And because of this, the Master says of the blindness of the Pharisees:

*For judgment I am come into this world; that they who see not, may see; and they who see, may become blind. And some of the Pharisees, who were with him, heard and they said unto him: Are we also blind? Jesus said to them: If you were blind, you should not have sin: but now you say: We see. Your sin remaineth.*<sup>10</sup>

It is most understandable, therefore, that Saint John wrote in the preface to his Gospel: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."<sup>11</sup> And the Apostle added: "that was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."<sup>12</sup>

Let us retain from all of this an important conclusion. Not even the greatest miracles performed by Our Lord prevailed over the obstinacy of certain souls. Catholic Action should not, therefore, expect that it will overwhelm every obstacle and that it will not, in its turn, be confronted with hardened souls.

Let us listen to Saint John and his commentary on the hardening of some souls, even in face of the greatest miracles of Our Lord:

---

<sup>8</sup> John 3:17-21.

<sup>9</sup> John 3:32.

<sup>10</sup> John 9:39-41.

<sup>11</sup> John 1:4-5.

<sup>12</sup> John 1:9-11.

*And whereas he had done so many miracles before them, they believed not in him. That the saying of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled, he said: "Lord who hath believed our hearing? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed." Therefore they could not believe, because Isaias said again: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." These things said Isaias, when he saw his glory and spoke of Him. However, many of the chief men also believed in him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, that they might not be cast out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.*<sup>13</sup>

The same can happen to Catholic Action. And even if not all doors are shut against it, it will find a large number of them locked, as happened to Saint Paul, who speaking in the Areopagus, attracted only a few souls. In this case the alternative imposes itself inexorably. And just as so many bishops and zealous pastors have faced this alternative, so also Catholic Action must humbly acknowledge that it too will often face the same alternative: to pick either masses or elites.

Indeed, it would be futile to allege that contemporary man has a much less hardened heart than that of Jews in Christ's time. His Holiness Pope Pius XI, whose opinion we have already quoted that our times are similar to the most abominable ones of the AntiChrist, affirmed in the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* that today's world reached such degradation, that it is in danger of falling even lower than it was before Christ!

### **Irreplaceable Fecundity of the Elites**

To this inevitable alternative, we respond by resolutely opting not for the masses, but for the elite. To this we are led by the most fundamental principles of apostolate. Anyone who has read the admirable book of Abbot Chautard, *The Soul of the Apostolate*, will have undoubtedly noticed that the fecundity of the apostolate comes much more from the apostle's degree of virtue than from the talent and natural gifts he may develop, or from the number of assistants he can enroll in his association. It is the grace of God that, in final analysis, works conversions; and man is no more than a channel. And the less obstructed he is by his vices and sins the more useful he will be. Thus, a generous person can bring a much greater number of souls to God than a multitude of apostles with little formation. The life of a Saint Francis of Sales, of a Saint Francis of Assisi, of a Saint Anthony of Padua, proves

---

<sup>13</sup> John 12:37-43.

abundantly the truth of this affirmation. It is, therefore, in the interest of the masses themselves, so as to make the diffusion of grace as extensive as possible, that we should prefer Catholic Action to become a handful of true apostles rather than a vast but inexpressive crowd.

While the idea of making Catholic Action a movement for both masses and elites at the same time is illusory—the movement will end up being only for the masses—the idea stems at times from a generous desire to spread the spiritual benefits of Catholic Action quickly. Forgotten, however, is the fact that God "*desireth not a multitude of faithless and unprofitable children.*"<sup>14</sup>

But it is very doubtful that a quick and pell-mell recruiting of great masses really brings about a distribution of great spiritual benefits if such benefits are not based on a slow, gradual and steady leavening.

The experience we have right under our eyes clearly proves that movements which grow excessively fast quickly diminish in fervor.

Little by little, after a totally fictitious enthusiasm has waned, these masses dissolve, without any noticeable improvement in their members. And thus God's punishment for their proud hastiness is confirmed: "*Substance got in haste shall be diminished, but that which by little and little is gathered with the hand shall increase.*"<sup>15</sup>

From the very beginning, the Church always preferred having a small but holy clergy to a large and less holy one. However great the lack of priests among us might be, no one ever thought of solving the problem by relaxing the conditions for promotion to the priesthood, much to the contrary. The same argument is valid in every sense for Catholic Action. In sum, Catholic Action must be selective and become an "elite" such that it may always fulfill the fatherly and lofty affirmation of Pius XI, that its members "*are certainly some of the best among the good.*"<sup>16</sup>

### **The Middle Ground Is Impossible**

But, could not Catholic Action be both a movement for masses and elites in the sense of containing indistinctly in its midst first rate spiritual souls and a large multitude of others, mediocre or lukewarm?

---

<sup>14</sup> Ecclus. 15:22.

<sup>15</sup> Prov. 13:11.

<sup>16</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, June 29, 1931, no. 10, at

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_29061931\\_non-abbiamo-bisogno\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_29061931_non-abbiamo-bisogno_en.html)

We consider so unfounded the opinion that Catholic Action should be opened even to individuals who habitually live in a declared state of mortal sin, that it is superfluous to discuss it.

Furthermore, we maintain that not every Catholic who fulfills the most elementary demands of the law of God and of the Church should join Catholic Action, but only those who, by their frequent reception of the Sacraments, exemplary life and edifying attitudes, really make up a select group.

Matters like this should not be solved in a purely theoretic way, but with one's eyes focused on the concrete reality. And the first lesson this reality offers is that no one, or almost no one, in our day and age succeeds in keeping the practice - albeit minimal - of the commandments of the Law of God, without frequently approaching the Holy Sacraments. This truth is valid for almost all ages and conditions. Consider for example, a young student, measure the violence of the fight he has to develop in order to prevail over the tumult of his passions; the thousand and one evil solicitations being made to him at every moment by all the modern factors of corruption, and ask yourself if he can win this fight without a true Eucharistic life. The head of a family, who so often has to choose between a dishonest transaction or misery for his household; the housewife who so often fulfills the duty of motherhood at the risk of her life, can say better than anyone else if they would be able to fulfill their duties with a simple yearly Communion.

Thus, it is rash to affirm that the mere practice once a year of duties imposed by the Church is the yardstick to differentiate the Catholic who can be an apostle because he habitually possesses the state of grace from one who does not.

Hence, if Catholic Action uses the simple practice of annual Communion and confession as the criterion for selection, it cannot avoid becoming one of those inexpressive crowds which, at times, are more difficult to ferment than one can imagine.

Furthermore, as we have said in a preceding chapter, one of the most important duties that befall Catholic Action is undoubtedly to provide for its members, particularly the young, a social center for their leisure hours. If Catholic Action does not want to fail it must necessarily employ this means of action, which was so advantageous to Fascism and Nazism under the names of *Dopolavoro* and *Kraft durch Freude*. This is the great lever used by totalitarian mysticism. Now, imagine the colorless atmosphere, the sometimes dangerous ambience that would exist in the Catholic Action center of a parish where all Catholics of annual communion and confession were admitted to its ranks. With lax consciences imbued with naturalism and the infiltration of so many secular



errors, and with minimalist and accommodating mentalities, such individuals would serve no purpose except to create a stifling atmosphere that would make any initiative to uplift souls harmful or sterile.

As a consequence, it is quite obvious that only first rate individuals who meet the best criterion—always an exemplary life linked to the frequent practice of the sacraments (and the more frequent the better)—can be members of Catholic Action.

### **The Voice of the Popes**

Thus, Pope Pius X was absolutely right when he desired as lay collaborators of the Church

*sound Catholics, firm in faith, solidly instructed in religious matters, truly submissive to the Church and especially to this supreme Apostolic See and the Vicar of Jesus Christ. They must be men of real piety, of manly virtue, and of a life so chaste and fearless that they will be a guiding example to all others.*

*If they are not so formed it will be difficult to arouse others to do good and practically impossible to act with a good intention. The strength needed to persevere in continually bearing the weariness of every true apostolate will fail. The calumnies of enemies, the coldness and frightfully little cooperation of even good men, sometimes even the jealousy of friends and fellow workers (excusable, undoubtedly, on account of the weakness of human nature, but also harmful and a cause of discord, offense and quarrels)—all these will weaken the apostle who lacks divine grace. Only virtue, patient and firm and at the same time mild and tender, can remove or diminish these difficulties in such a way that the works undertaken by Catholic forces will not be compromised.<sup>17</sup>*

For this same reason Pope Benedict XV wanted lay apostles "to be deeply penetrated by the truths of the Catholic Faith, so that knowing one's duties and rights, one acts in accordance with them." And the Pontiff continues:

*We sum up our thought in one word: Jesus Christ must be formed in the souls of the faithful before they can fight for Him. If new circumstances seem to demand new works, those who...have been well prepared for the fight for the law, will perform them with no difficulties.<sup>18</sup>*

<sup>17</sup> St. Pius X, Encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito*, June 11, 1905, no. 11, at

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_11061905\\_il-fermo-proposito\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11061905_il-fermo-proposito_en.html)

<sup>18</sup> Benedict XV, Letter *Accepimus Vos*, Aug. 1, 1916 at

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xv/letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_let\\_19160801\\_accepimus-vos\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xv/letters/documents/hf_ben-xv_let_19160801_accepimus-vos_it.html). (Our translation.)

In his Apostolic Letter on Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Pius XI adds that

*those who do not possess a patrimony of interior virtues, we do not consider them apt for the tasks of the apostolate: the same as the bronze which resounds or the tympani which reverberate, they could not render a service, rather, **they would harm the cause they pretend to defend: the experience of preceding times already proved it.***<sup>19</sup>

It might be useful to mention yet another topic from the same Apostolic Letter:

*The youth inclined by nature to exterior works and always in a hurry to throw themselves in the battlefield of life, should be led to feel that before thinking of others and the Catholic cause, it will be necessary for them to fight for their own interior perfection by means of study and the practice of virtues.*<sup>20</sup>

As we can see, nothing could be more conclusive.

There is no better commentary on this luminous doctrine of the Popes than the aforementioned book by Abbot Chautard, to which we refer those readers that desire more extensive argumentation. From all that has been said, let us merely retain the consequence drawn from the writing of Pius XI: Catholics recruited by Catholic Action in a disorderly and hasty fashion will be noxious to the cause of Holy Mother Church.

One last argument remains to be considered: if Pius XI convoked all the faithful to Catholic Action, how can one assert that only some should actually join Catholic Action?

This is very easily answered. If Pius XI regarded as noxious to have the collaboration of "*oves, boves...et serpentes*," how can one maintain that it was his intention to convoke everyone? In fact, what he did was to suggest that everyone acquire sufficient formation so that, if and when proper authority deemed them apt, they could come to work in the great militia of the apostolate. "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*"<sup>21</sup>

### **Interior Life Is Superior to Technical Formation**

But what is the nature of this formation?

A distinction has been made in this regard - and rightly so - between spiritual formation, designed to endow the apostle with

---

<sup>19</sup> Pius XI, Apostolic Letter *Singulare Illud*.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 22:14.

the necessary virtues, and the so-called "*technical formation*," which strives to teach the Catholic Action intern or member the means he should use for his apostolate to be efficacious.

Unfortunately, the doctrine that the so-called technical preparation is much more important than the spiritual preparation has been spread among us to such an extent that, in some circles, it occupies a preponderant or almost exclusive place. We disagree with this way of understanding. A simple focusing on the problem's real aspects shows its true solution.

While a certain distinction can no doubt be made between spiritual and technical formation, this distinction can never imply a separation. Indeed, the technical formation includes notions about the purpose, nature and structure of Catholic Action, its relations with the hierarchy and the various lay organizations, the means to expound the truth, attract and conquer souls for Jesus Christ; the dedication, enthusiasm and supernatural spirit with which apostolate must be done; knowledge of the ambience, the social problems involved, etc. Now then, without serious religious instruction, without a true Catholic sense, it is absolutely impossible to have an exact idea of all these subjects. The numerous errors we are refuting in this book prove beyond any doubt how right we are in affirming this.

Furthermore, possessing **natural** qualities, so useful to the apostolate, is far from being the most important factor for success. This is proven by the supernatural nature of the communication of grace, which is the essence of the apostolate. We will limit ourselves to narrating a typical episode told by Abbot Chautard.

Common sense evidently demands that the technical formation should be pursued with careful attention. But it would be an absurdity to neglect the spiritual formation, sacrificing it for the sake of the technical one. Rather, if any sacrifice is required it should necessarily be made to the detriment of the technical formation and to benefit the interior life. In other words, in the scale of values the spiritual formation must precede the technical formation.

Let us read the splendid example Abbot Chautard gives in this regard:

*A Congregation of nuns, excellent catechists, was under the direction of a religious whose life has just been written. He was a man of prayer. One day he said to a local Superior, "Reverend Mother, I think it would be a good thing if Sister So-and-So were to give up teaching catechism for at least a year."*

*"Father! What are you saying! Why, she's the best we have! Children come from every part of town to be in her class, she has*

such a marvelous knack of teaching! If we take her off, it means most of these little boys will simply desert us!"

"I followed her class from the gallery," said Father, "and it is true that she sweeps them all off their feet, but it is in all too human a way. Give her another year in the novitiate, and let her get a better foundation in the interior life; then she will sanctify both her own soul and the souls of the children by her zeal and the use of her talents. But at the present time, without being aware of it, she is standing in the way of the direct action of Our Lord upon these souls that are being prepared for First Communion. Come now, Mother, I see that my insistence in this matter makes you unhappy. Very well, I will make a bargain with you! I know a certain Sister N--, a very interior soul, but without any special talent. Ask your Superior General to send her here for a while. The other Sister can come for the first fifteen minutes and start the class off, just to calm your fears of desertion; but little by little she will drop out of the picture. Then you will see that the children will pray better and will sing their hymns with much more devotion. Their recollection and docility will reflect a more supernatural character. That will be your barometer."

A fortnight later the Superior was able to verify this forecast. Sister N- was teaching all alone, and yet the number of children grew larger. It was really Christ that was teaching catechism through her. Her looks, her modesty, her gentleness, her kindness, her way of making the Sign of the Cross all spoke Our Lord. Sister X had been able to take the driest topic, give it a clever exposition, and make it interesting. Sister N- did more than that. Of course, she did not neglect to prepare her explanations, and to express them in all clarity; but her secret, and the thing that was paramount in her class, was unction. And it is by this unction that souls really enter into contact with Jesus.

In Sister N-'s class there were far fewer bursts of noisy enthusiasm, or looks of astonishment, far less of that fascination that could have been equally well produced by an interesting lecture by some explorer, or by the account of a battle.

On the other hand, there was an atmosphere of recollected attention. These little boys behaved in the catechism class as they would in Church. No human methods were brought into play to dispel boredom or prevent dissipation. What, then, was the mysterious influence that dominated this group? Make no mistake, it was Christ, working directly. For a soul of interior life teaching a catechism lesson is like a harp that sounds under the fingers of the Divine Musician. And no human artistry, no matter

*how wonderful, can be compared to the action of Jesus on the soul.*<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard, O.C.S.O., *The Soul of the Apostolate* (Trappist, Kentucky: The Abbey of Gethsemani, Inc., 1946), pp. 158-160.



## Chapter 3

### Auxiliary Associations—The "Apostolate of Conquest"

The only point remaining to be dealt with in this part of the book is the question of the relationship of Catholic Action with the auxiliary associations and the problem of the apostolate of conquest.

#### The Problem

Here again, the perspective that meets our gaze is very clear. On one hand, innumerable papal documents assert that religious associations are "*true and providential auxiliaries of Catholic Action*", as Pius XI said; and so many were the affirmations of this great Pontiff in this line, that it would be difficult to quote them all. Also Pope Pius XII, in his memorable allocution on Catholic Action of September 5, 1940, dedicated a whole section to the exemplary harmony that should exist between Catholic Action and the auxiliary associations.

In the same order of ideas, we could also mention the statutes of the Brazilian Catholic Action, which impose on auxiliary associations the obligation to collaborate with Catholic Action. Thus, this is for both of them not only a duty but also a right. Lastly the Brazilian Plenary Council (1939), in many decrees, commended, counseled and even imposed the establishing of associations, which in final analysis are auxiliaries of Catholic Action.

On the other hand, we note in certain associations an inexplicable obstinacy in refusing to render due collaboration to Catholic Action and in some cases even ignoring it altogether. For their part, certain elements of Catholic Action defend the opposite error and display a systematic desire to completely dispense with any collaboration from auxiliary associations, rejecting it disdainfully however generous it might be. Both of these extreme and passionate positions must be avoided with the greatest assurance: for if any doubts on this matter remained, the allocution of Pope Pius XII would have dissipated them completely.

#### Auxiliary Associations Must Not Disappear

First of all let us say that the claim that auxiliary associations must eventually be dissolved in keeping with longstanding but hidden motives of the Holy See is totally

unfounded. According to this account, the Holy See is supposedly in the process of slowly killing the auxiliary associations by burying them in praise while giving Catholic Action a primacy tending to rid it, at last, from its "*true and providential auxiliaries*." Imagining such a thing would be tantamount to assuming that the Holy See is acting with unmatched duplicity. Indeed, in documents intended to be known in the whole world, the Holy See would be supposedly lavishing fallacious praise upon associations which, because of an affectionate frailty or some other reason, it lacks the courage to wound openly.

Thus, they err, and certainly err, who instead of considering the religious associations as auxiliaries, look upon them as a hindrance, destined sooner or later to disappear completely, and whose death should be hastened through a methodical campaign of defamation, silence and contempt. In his letter *With Special Pleasure*, of January 31, 1942, to His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, Pope Pius XII refuted this opinion with the following allusion to the well-deserving Marian Congregations:

*Our liveliest desires are that these associations of Christian piety and apostolate, expand every day; that daily they become further strengthened in an intimate and deep spiritual life; that with every day that passes they cooperate more and more, with their traditional respect and humble submission to the norms and guidance of the hierarchy, in the expansion of the Kingdom of God, and that they spread the Christian life ever more abundantly in individuals, in the families and in society.*

As can be seen, it is not merely a "wish," but "*his liveliest desires*."

### **It Is No Less So With Catholic Action**

Equally mistaken are those who imagine that the establishment of Catholic Action was an audacious innovation wrenched in a reckless way from the old age of Pius XI by some bold advisers. The most elementary justice toward the memory of the glorious Pontiff obliges us to recognize that the vigorous hand, who until death's threshold, knew how to grip firmly the helm of the Church, crossing haughtily the great waves stirred up by Nazism and Communism, could not be forced by the agility of some palace conspiracy; moreover, this hypothesis could only be accepted with discredit to the prestige of the Holy Catholic Church. Catholic Action may, of course, assume one form or the other with the passing of time, perhaps maintaining with the auxiliary associations very different kinds of relationship as circumstances



may require. Both the former and the latter, however, will continue to exist.

### **A Simplistic Solution**

Nor do we see as being on truth's side, those who led by a praiseworthy desire of conciliation try to delimit the fields pertaining to Catholic Action and the auxiliary associations, attributing to the former a monopoly of the apostolate and restricting the latter to the task of interior formation and the cultivation of piety. The papal documents that expressly grant to Catholic Action the right, nay, that impose on it the duty of forming its members are innumerable. Now, this duty implies the formation and fostering of piety without which no formation can be considered complete.

On the other hand, it is not true that the bylaws of the religious associations assign piety as their exclusive purpose. On the contrary, the great majority of these, orient, stimulate, and some even impose the apostolate on their members; and many associations carry out their own works of apostolate, which, by the way, are generally in a flourishing state. His Holiness Pope Pius XII, in his aforementioned letter to His Eminence Sebastião Cardinal Leme, expresses himself in such a way as to remove from such an opinion, not only its very foundation, but even all and any appearance of truth. The Holy Father positively affirms that he wishes to see the Marian Congregations dedicated to the exterior and social apostolate, and not only to the field of piety and formation.

The Holy Father expresses his great appreciation for the spiritual bouquet of the members of the congregation, but great as this joy was, *"his satisfaction was even greater in knowing that the brave Marian hosts are efficacious collaborators in propagating the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and that they carry out a fruitful apostolate by means of numerous works of zeal."* Thus, the exterior works of apostolate to which the Marian Congregations presently dedicate themselves are not seen by the Holy Father as a field into which the Congregations have intruded, and where at best they may be tolerated for lack of better laborers. Christ's Vicar on earth rejoices with the fact and thus implicitly affirms that they have a full, ample and total right to do it. This sentence proves it: *"...this confirms for Us once more, that these Marian hosts occupy, in accordance with their glorious traditions, under the orders of the hierarchy, a conspicuous place in the toil and fight for the greater glory of God and the good of souls."* In other words, doing everything they presently do, they are merely in the "conspicuous" role ascribed to them by tradition and this

"conspicuous" role suffered no alteration with supervening facts as, for example, the establishment of Catholic Action.

Some people claimed that the Marian Congregations have a juridical structure that makes them radically and viscerally incapable of doing apostolate in our day and age. It is superfluous to emphasize how much the Apostolic Letter disavows this unwarranted and baseless affirmation. Others have sustained that the Congregations occupy in Brazil a place too noticeable, thus stealing from Catholic Action its due. This most certainly does not occur, for the Pontiff rejoices with the magnitude of this role and adds the expression of his great satisfaction for the fact that they *"occupy a conspicuous place"*—as he has been informed—in the toil and fight for the greater glory of God and the good of souls, and that they are of great importance, as a spiritual force, for the Catholic cause in Brazil. What information did the Supreme Pontiff have to formulate such an affirmation? It was the most authorized and impartial. He himself tells us so: *"...you have manifested this publicly, dear son, on repeated occasions, with so much enthusiasm, and other Venerable Brothers in the episcopate have done the same."* In other words, it is the entire Catholic hierarchy that affirms, applauds and sanctions it. Who would dare disagree?

Further on, the Holy Father insists: *"a solid spiritual formation and an intense and fruitful apostolic activity are both essential elements to every Marian Congregation."* How can it be claimed, then, that the Rules of the Congregations themselves confine these associations to the mere field of piety? Someone will allege, however, that in light of the present situation the Holy Father might not like the Marian Congregations to increase the scope of their action.

This supposition is not true. Even less true is the presumption that the Holy Father wishes the Congregations to perish in a slow agony.

### **The Problem's True Characteristics**

The reality is, therefore, that both Catholic Action and the religious associations should apply themselves to formation and apostolate. As they structure their relationships in this area, neither party can ignore this reality, under pain of basing itself on totally unreal juridical and doctrinal premises and thereby dooming itself to failure.

### **Pius XII Indicates New Directions**

It is not up to us to define the manner in which this collaboration should develop within the objective limits stated above. This is a problem for positive legislation, and one that lies within the scope of the statutes of the Brazilian Catholic Action and whatever else the Very Reverend Bishops decide on the subject in their respective dioceses. We limit ourselves to reminding that in the often quoted allocution of Pope Pius XII on Catholic Action, the Supreme Pontiff opened a new path for the solution of the problem by recommending that Catholic Action nuclei be founded inside the associations themselves and calling on the nuclei to act as stimuli and ferment within them:

*And if...internal associations of Catholic Action are established within religious associations which have goals and organized forms of apostolate, the former should enter with discretion and reserve not disturbing anything of the structure and life of the association, but only giving new impulse to the spirit and forms of apostolate incorporating them to the larger central organization.*

Thus, when founded also within the associations, Catholic Action would be a nucleus of fervent members leading the others to sanctification and combat. Since this method has already been used in Italy for several years, under the eyes of the Holy See, and has consistently achieved the best results, we deem it providential and bring it insistently to the attention of our readers.

We must also add that given the juridical situation of Catholic Action and the Auxiliary Associations in Brazil, this solution presents most important advantages.

### **Attacking the Prerogatives of Catholic Action Is Nefarious and Vain**

Indeed, only a mind so obscured with prejudices of every kind as to have lost entirely any sense of objectivity could refuse to see the extraordinarily solid juridical situation of Catholic Action in Brazil's religious life. Created with a most solemn document signed by the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy in Brazil and officially approved by the Holy See, it enjoys such importance that fighting against it is like charging against windmills. Don Quixote's fight against these invincible enemies, while ridiculous for its impracticability, had at least the merit of its heroic intentions. Not even this merit, however, can be ascribed to auxiliary associations which, driven by an individualism contrary to Catholic sense, were to fight against Catholic Action. The Auxiliary Associations should render unto Catholic Action the double assistance of enrolling in it their best members, and

cooperating resolutely in its general activities. This is what the statutes of the Brazilian Catholic Action ordain. In fulfilling this duty, the attitude of the Auxiliary Associations should not be one of melancholic resignation, but that of one who joyfully fulfils a glorious responsibility.

On the other hand, it would be equally foolish to ignore that the auxiliary associations possess themselves as well a very solid juridical situation, especially after the Apostolic Letter "*Con Singular Complacencia*" [With Special Delight] and that Catholic Action should refrain from abusively draining for itself the best elements of the Auxiliary Associations—an easy recruiting process that would destroy everything outside the structure of the fundamental organizations of Catholic Action.

It is necessary, therefore, to have great equilibrium in the manner in which cooperation is established between the fundamental organizations and the auxiliary associations of Catholic Action. It seems to us that such equilibrium would be maintained in a much more secure fashion by paving the way for a harmonious and fruitful interpenetration between the fundamental and auxiliary organizations of Catholic Action, instead of considering them necessarily and always as entirely parallel entities, sharing only their common obedience to the Diocesan Board and the hierarchy.

As for the relations between the fundamental organizations and the auxiliary associations of Catholic Action, whenever they constitute completely different structures we can see no better way of systematizing them within the spirit and letter of the bylaws of the Brazilian Catholic Action, than by means of the wise rules published in this regard by the Right Reverend Monsignor Antonio de Castro Mayer, at the time General Assistant of the São Paulo Catholic Action, and today Vicar General, responsible for all the works and organizations of the laity, by order of His Excellency the Most Reverend José Gaspar D'Afonseca e Silva, Archbishop of São Paulo. We are publishing this wise and beautiful document, distinguished for its true equilibrium, as a footnote.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The following Archdiocesan document was published in the São Paulo press:

#### **CATHOLIC ACTION AND AUXILIARY ASSOCIATIONS**

On orders of His Excellency the Most Reverend José Gaspar D'Afonseca e Silva, Metropolitan Archbishop, and the Very Reverend Canon Dr. Antonio de Castro Mayer, General Assistant of Catholic Action, the following document is published in the press:

The Divine Savior constituted a restricted group of disciples, whom he formed with special dedication, associating men to His Work of Redemption of the Human Race and the conversion of a world given over to the senseless adoration of pagan idols. The Savior made of that small group a militia of choice, a sacred ferment, to which he gave the mission of renovating the face of the earth, indefatigably feeding their spirits with doctrine, in intimacy and in a way proportional to the particular necessities of each one, modeling their hearts by means of a personal direction,

---

enhanced by all of the attractions of His company and the irresistible force of His examples; and sending upon them the Holy Ghost, distributor of priceless gifts for the intellect and the will.

Our Lord Jesus Christ opened the Kingdom of Heaven to the crowds to which He taught the way of the truth. However, He entrusted to a much smaller number the task of opening in His name the way of bliss to other peoples as well.

Faithful to the Divine Master, the Church always followed the same process; and while preaching the Gospel to all peoples, she reserved a particular tenderness and zeal to form in a very special way the members of the Mystical Body of Christ destined to hold office in the Hierarchy established by the Redeemer.

There is more. The Church, drawing from the most wise example of the Savior all the teachings it contains, since the earliest times did not limit herself to impose on all the faithful the duty of apostolate, but congregated around herself the most fervent to endow them with special virtues. Having been thus formed, such lay people were instruments of choice and special collaborators, designed to participate inside the Learning Church, of the holy sufferings and meritorious work of the Teaching Church, excelling in their unbreakable docility to the Magisterium of the Church, in their all-embracing and unconditional submission to those, who above them were constituted in the dignity of priests and bishops.

Pius XI of holy and lamented memory, gave brilliance shine and providential increase to this custom that Catholicism preserved uninterrupted for the twenty centuries of its existence, when, to overthrow the insolence of the idols which the pagan multitudes of our days were starting to acclaim and worship, he made obligatory for all peoples to establish an elite militia of Catholic Action, calling on all faithful to climb to a very high doctrinal and moral purity and fight courageously with it and in it, the pomps and works of Satan.

The appropriateness of this principle of prudence applied by the great Pontiff, is so obvious that human ingenuity itself recognized it and used it in its own way. All of the great empires had their choice troops, who were in the vast set of military formations, at the same time, core and backbone of the army, disciplined and audacious militia whose courage should fill with awe and encouragement the bravest among the brave in the other regiments. This is the tradition of all the armies of great generals who conquered lands and founded empires. If the great warriors and conquerors acted this way, why would the peaceful and invincible army of Christ the King that should conquer all peoples act otherwise? These considerations suffice to clarify with precision the relations between Catholic Action and the Teaching Church, which is the general staff of Jesus Christ: if the situation of Catholic Action in regard to the Hierarchy is special in any way, it is because the latter has the right to expect from the former a more prompt and loving discipline than from any other religious association.

On the other hand, in relation to Catholic works and associations, its position is implicitly defined: to be an encouragement, example and point of reference for common action. For their part, the associations owe Catholic Action a fraternal and disciplined cooperation.

In order to give these concepts a living and full-fledged application, the following principles must be observed in the Archdiocese:

#### I

Faithful to the spirit that distinguishes it, Catholic Action excels in reverence and docility toward the Ecclesiastical Authority. Therefore, in their respective areas, Ecclesiastical Assistants, in addition to doctrinal censors, are a living law in everything that pertains to the activities of Catholic Action. Members of Catholic Action owe all due respect to lay members of the organization who hold directive office in it, since their authority reflects the authority of the Ecclesiastical Assistant.

When priests and men and women religious not having the office of assistant are present at meetings of Catholic Action, they should always be treated with great respect because of the sublimity of their state and be given precedence right after the ecclesiastical assistant.

After them, precedence goes to the members of the Archdiocesan Commission.

#### II

The fundamental associations of Catholic Action should not be considered as perfect entities in themselves, and united only for a common end, but as sections of the same whole.

Thus, the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the various sections or subsections are delegates of the Assistant General of Catholic Action and enjoy his confidence. The laymen who occupy offices of direction in Catholic Action are also delegates and persons of confidence of the Assistant General.

#### III

---

Since Catholic Action must be at the same time an encouragement and model for all religious associations of the faithful, it will only admit as members persons fully aware of the high dignity and arduous tasks it entails. Those who do not maintain themselves at the level of such a high mission will be dismissed forthwith.

## IV

Religious associations, and in a special way those whose objective is the sanctification of their members, are true seminaries of Catholic Action to which they render a most precious help, by making their members more fervent in the spiritual life or better trained in the apostolate, in such a way that the most edifying among them become the best fitted to join Catholic Action after being prepared by it.

## V

The member of Catholic Action who without prejudice to his obligation toward it, and with the approval of the competent authority in his sector, dedicates himself to direct a religious association, deserves only praise.

On the other hand the member of a religious association, who with the excuse of the apostolate in Catholic Action takes the initiative of abandoning the sodality to which he belongs, without an express decision of the organs of Catholic Action, does not show good spirit.

## VI

As auxiliaries to Catholic Action, religious associations should be honored to provide it with the largest possible number of members, and to willingly renounce the collaboration of those whose apostolate the competent powers of Catholic Action believe their association should absorb entirely.

## VII

Except in special situations verified by the Archdiocesan Commission, the members of Catholic Action whose chapters, for any reason, do not hold pious practices in common on Sunday mornings, should join some auxiliary association that does so. In so doing they excel in docility toward the constituted authority in the association.

## VIII

The Archdiocesan Commission, acting entirely on its own criteria, but mindful of all persons involved, must make sure that the recruiting of members of Catholic Action in religious associations does not deprive them of members whose work is indispensable to the good functioning of their social activities. In this sense, it will take special care to ensure that members of Catholic Action who are directors of auxiliary associations, can perform their duties in a satisfactory way without prejudice to their relationship with Catholic Action.

## IX

No activity will be initiated by Catholic Action in a parish or auxiliary association without a previous consultation with the Pastor or Ecclesiastical Director respectively.

## X

The Archdiocesan Commission has the exclusive right to direct the doctrinal and moral formation Catholic Action gives its members, as well as to determine and direct all of its actions in general, deciding whether they should be performed exclusively by fundamental sectors of Catholic Action, by these sectors in common with auxiliary associations or works, or finally by the latter alone.

\* \* \*

By decision of the Archdiocesan Commission, meetings and study workshops should be held in all the fundamental and auxiliary associations of Catholic Action to study exclusively the aforementioned document, which in both its preface and ten subsequent paragraphs contains indispensable concepts for the spiritual formation of the Catholic laity and the organization of their apostolate.

This document is true to the original, kept in the Chancery archives.

(Signed) Canon Paulo Rolim Loureiro  
Chancellor of the Archdiocese

One of the most eminent bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of São Paulo, told us once in conversation that the aforementioned document effectively contained the sure and wise guidelines that the solution of such a delicate problem demands, but that in practice, the success of its application depended on the observance of a line of conduct so exact and difficult to ascertain in certain specific cases, that the publication of these guidelines, while having opened many horizons, had not yet uttered the last word on the subject. We were then in 1940. The allocution of His Holiness Pope Pius XI came afterward, which, as we stated, makes the foundation of Catholic Action nuclei within the auxiliary associations possible. With this new step, it seems to us that the question is entirely solved: two wise and fruitful ways are open for establishing, in accordance with the intentions of Pius XI and Pius XII, a regime of frank understanding and intimate cordiality between the fundamental organizations of Catholic Action and its auxiliary associations.

### **Another Fundamental Problem**

The same intemperate thirst of expansion, which has lead Catholic Action, in certain areas, into the grave mistake of disorderly and hasty recruiting, also generated a rather unfair state of spirit in regard to the problem of determining if Catholic Action should, preferably, dedicate itself to sanctifying the faithful or to converting the unfaithful.

### **The Problem's True Aspect**

At first glance, plain common sense would make us answer with Our Lord "*oportet haec facere, et illa non omittere.*"<sup>2</sup> There is no reason for Catholic Action to neglect either one of these highly laudable activities. In practice, however, the problem may present itself when Catholic Action, normally overwhelmed with tasks, will hesitate in deciding how it should use the sparse remnants of time left on its hands: in organizing a small Easter campaign or in handing out leaflets to convert spiritists; in putting together an effort to preserve the purity of Catholic families, or trying to infiltrate Communist trade unions; building a center for its members, or setting up a project to combat Protestantism. Consequently, we would like to comment on the subject.

First of all it must be made entirely clear that the problem may never be resolved in a uniform fashion. Local circumstances vary immensely and may give to one or another of these tasks such

---

<sup>2</sup> "*These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone*" (Matt. 23:23.)

aspects of urgency that an immediate intervention is required. Everything we say is applicable only to general cases, in which one cannot really determine if concretely one or the other task is more urgent, so that the problem must be resolved in its theoretical elements.

### **Charity Establishes Priorities**

In view of what has been said, we do not hesitate to affirm that above all else we must desire the sanctification and perseverance of the good; in second place, the sanctification of those Catholics who have fallen away from the practice of the Faith, and, last of all, the conversion of those who are not Catholic.

#### **a) We Should Concern Ourselves Above All With the Sanctification and Perseverance of the Good**

Let us justify the first proposition. A simple analysis of the dogma of the Communion of Saints offers us a precious argument to this end. There is a supernatural solidarity in the destiny of souls in such a way that the merits of some turn into graces for others and, reciprocally, souls which stop meriting, impoverish the treasure of the Church. Let us hear, in this regard, an admirable lesson of a master. The Reverend Father Maurice de la Taille, in his well-known treatise on the Holy Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Eucharist, notes that "*the habitual devotion of the Church never disappears, because It will never lose the Spirit of Holiness It received; this devotion however, in different times, can be greater or smaller.*"<sup>3</sup> And applying this principle to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he adds:

*The greater this devotion is, the more acceptable is oblation. So, it is of the utmost importance to have in the Church many saints and very holy ones; and men and women religious should never be spared nor prevented from making the greatest efforts for the value of the Masses to increase daily and for the unfailing voice of the Blood of Christ crying from earth to become more powerful to the ears of God. For the Blood of Christ cries from the altars of the Church, but through our lips and hearts: all the louder and more vigorously as we may allow it.*<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is not difficult to see that, in the plan of Divine Providence, the sanctification of good souls occupies a central role in the conversion of infidels and sinners. Whether they be ecclesiastics or laymen, those souls are in a certain way "*the*

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Fr. Maurice de la Taille, *The Holy Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Eucharist*, (??????), pp. 330-1. (Our translation.)

<sup>4</sup> Apud Filograssi, *Adnotationes in S.S. Eucharistiam*, pp. 1115-1116.



*salt of the earth*"<sup>5</sup> and "*the light of the world.*"<sup>6</sup> And it is in this sense that it must be affirmed that the contemplative orders are of great usefulness to the whole Church of God. Now, the same should be said of holy souls who live a life of apostolate in the world. Woe to Christian communities where the light of the prayer of the just goes out and the expiatory value of sacrifices decreases. Abbot Chautard says that the simple fact of establishing contemplative and cloistered convents in mission areas works marvels. In the final analysis, it is on sanctity that the victory of the Church depends in the great combat she is engaged in. One truly supernatural soul, who with the merits of her interior life makes her apostolate fruitful, conquers a greater number of souls for God than a legion of apostles with a mediocre prayer life.

This truth is commonly accepted in regard to the clergy. Important as the problem of priestly vocations may be, it will never be on a par with the need for sanctifying the clergy. This is the most important issue in every country. And, implicitly, the same principle imposes itself in matters of lay apostolate. If it is more important to have a group of truly holy priestly apostles than a great number of priests, logically it is more important to have a group of truly interior lay apostles than a useless crowd of members of Catholic Action. If for the clergy the paramount problem is the growing sanctification of its members, Catholic Action, the clergy's humble collaborator, cannot have a greater desire than the sanctification of its own members and of all pious souls in the Church of God.

There is a flagrant naturalism in imagining that the Church would gain by increasing the apostolate **activity** of its members to the detriment of their prayer life. However useful and praiseworthy exterior activities will always be, the prayer of souls truly united to God is what gives the Church its best laurels. Leo XIII says so, in the encyclical *Octobri Mense*, of September 22, 1891:

*But as regards the prayers which we join to the suffrages of the heavenly citizens, and offer humbly to God to obtain His mercy for the Church, they are always favourably received and heard, and either obtain for the Church great and imperishable benefits, or their influence is temporarily withheld for a time of greater need. In truth, to these supplications is added an immense weight and grace - the prayers and merits of Christ Our Lord, Who has loved the Church and has delivered Himself up for her to sanctify her...so that He should be glorified in her(Eph.*

---

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 5:13.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 5:14.

5:25-27). *He is her Sovereign Head, holy, innocent, always living to make intercession for us...*

*And if in their wickedness her enemies have not accomplished all the injury they had resolved upon and striven to do, they nevertheless seem to go on unchecked. But, despite them the Church, amidst all these conflicts, will always stand out and increase in greatness and glory. Nor can human reason rightly understand why evil, apparently so dominant, should yet be so restricted as regards its results; whilst the Church, driven into straits, comes forth glorious and triumphant.*<sup>7</sup>

And His Holiness adds:

*The time will come when...the marvellous power and utility of prayer will be shown forth. Then it will be seen how many in the midst of a corrupt age have kept themselves pure and inviolate from all concupiscence of the flesh and the spirit, working out their sanctification in the fear of God (2 Cor 7:1); how others, when exposed to the danger of temptation, have without delay restrained themselves gaining new strength for virtue from the peril itself; how others, having fallen, have been seized with the ardent desire to be restored to the embraces of a compassionate God.*<sup>8</sup>

If, from the standpoint of the Communion of Saints, this is the conclusion we should reach, what theology tells us of the essence of the apostolate also leads us to an identical conclusion. As we have already said, the apostle is a mere instrument of God and the work of sanctification or conversion is essentially supernatural and divine.<sup>9</sup> *"No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him,"* Our Lord said.<sup>10</sup> Now then, in such an august task, God does not use, if only rarely, unworthy instruments; and the question of Scripture *"ab immundo, quid mundabitur?"*<sup>11</sup> expresses not only the natural and psychological incapacity of an unworthy apostle to produce fruitful works, but also the repugnance God feels in using such elements to operate the most august mysteries of the regeneration of souls.

Do not think, however, that only mortal sin is harmful to the fruitfulness of an apostle's work. Also venial sins and even simple imperfections, by decreasing the union of souls with God, bring down to a trickle the torrents of grace of which they should be channels. How many praiseworthy associations just keep dragging on with a thousand difficulties as their generous directors fight on all fields without obtaining any result; and thus, hundreds or

<sup>7</sup> Leo XIII, *Octobri Mense*, no. 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 109, arts. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> John 6:44.

<sup>11</sup> Ecclus. 34:4. ("What can be made clean by the unclean?")

thousands of souls remain fallen away, souls who in the designs of Providence should be saved through that association. And, while the most heroic efforts are broken against all difficulties, their directors do not notice that the source of the failures is elsewhere. "*Venti et maria oboediunt ei*,"<sup>12</sup> says Scripture about Jesus, and certainly under His command all obstacles could crumble. But the intermediaries of divine grace, however zealous, have this or that infidelity which separates them from God. And Jesus waits for the renunciation of some overly lively sentimentalism, or some overly keen self-love, for the obstruction of the channels of grace to clear. What seemed a question of money or social influence is often a question of interior generosity, in a word, a question of sanctification.

In the Book of Josue is found a highly meaningful narration in this regard. Acan took for himself, among the spoils of the city of Jericho, some valuable objects, in spite of this action being illicit, because these objects were covered by the anathema with which God fulminated Jericho.<sup>13</sup> This simple fact—one man in a huge army had a few cursed objects in his luggage—was enough for the Hebrew army to be inexplicably and noisily defeated as it attacked the small city of Hai. God then revealed to Joshua that the Hebrew armies would only resume their victorious streak when Acan were exterminated with all that he possessed. Over his mortal remains a monument of curse was built and only thus the wrath of the Lord was deviated from Israel. This is an eloquent image of the harm that even one lay apostle, keeping in his soul any guilty attachment to his sins or imperfections, can do to a whole organization.

With all of this in mind it is easy to perceive how erroneous it is to pretend that, according to an unfortunately common expression, to work for the sanctification of the good is to "*beat a dead horse*." We have quite intentionally presented, in favor of our thesis, arguments that prove with complete clarity that this sanctification is the most precious condition for obtaining the so ardently desired conversion of the infidels. How much more could we say, however, about the importance of the apostolate for the perseverance of the good!

#### **b) Secondly, We Should Bring Sinners Back to the Life of Grace**

The preceding arguments are also useful to prove that it is more important to return to the law of grace sinners who abandoned the practice of Religion, than to convert infidels. We wish, however,

---

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 8:27. ("The winds and the sea obey him.")

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Josue, 7.

to add one more argument on this point. Holy Baptism received by one of the faithful, makes him a son of God, a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, a living temple of the Holy Ghost. The graces with which God then showers him in his age of innocence, the Eucharistic conviviality with Our Lord, all concurs for a Catholic to have an invaluable title of divine predilection. It is thus that in a general way<sup>14</sup> God loves immensely more the souls who form his Church than heretical and infidel peoples. Because of this, a just man who "*leaves the commandment of God*"<sup>15</sup> gives Him a suffering immensely greater than the perseverance of an infidel in his infidelity. The sinner continues to be a son of God, but a prodigal son whose absence fills the father's house with unspeakable mourning. Broken reed, but not separated, flickering but still smoldering wick, he is the object of God's solicitude. And for this same reason the Redeemer, "*desireth not the death of the sinner, but that he convert and live,*"<sup>16</sup> multiplies his entreaties to return him to the fold. The Catholic sinner, a son of God and therefore a beloved ingrate, is our brother to whom we are linked by duties of love and assistance, duties incomparably greater than those toward non-Catholics. This is an absolutely indisputable point of theology. And this is the reason why we are obliged to devote our time to the conversion of Catholic sinners, in preference to that of infidels. The terrible word of Scripture, uttered by the most sweet lips of the Savior, applies here with all propriety: "*It is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the dogs.*"<sup>17</sup>

The thought of His Holiness Pope Pius XI, expressed in his message of February 12, 1931, published by *L'Osservatore Romano*, was no different:

*The Apostle orders that when We speak to men, We do good to all, but especially to those who possess the same Faith. It is well, then, that We speak first to all those who, living members of the family and fold of the Lord, the Catholic Church, call Us by the sweet name of Father; to the Pastors and the faithful, the lamb and the sheep, and to all those whom the Pastor and Supreme King Jesus Christ charged Us to teach and guide.*

---

<sup>14</sup> We say, in a general way, because there are righteous souls who belong to the soul of the Church, but not to its body. Such souls may be preferred by God more than a hardened sinner who belongs to the body but not the soul of the Church. Notice, though, that the persons belonging to the soul and not the body of the Church are rare in the multitude of heretics and pagans. They are exceptions. On the other hand, among those righteous persons only a few can be recognized as such, because the virtues are written in a visible way on the foreheads of only a few privileged ones. So the cases that can open an exception to the general rule are extremely rare. And the general rule is that in the apostolate we must prefer converting sinners in the state of mortal sin rather than pagans or heretics.

<sup>15</sup> Mark 7:8.

<sup>16</sup> From the Litany for the Lenten Season at [www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/InTemporibus/Quadragesimae/LitaniaeQuad.html](http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/InTemporibus/Quadragesimae/LitaniaeQuad.html)

<sup>17</sup> Mark 7:27.

And Saint Thomas says the same:

*Out of charity we ought to love more that which has more fully the reason for being loved out of charity, as stated above (II-II, q. 25, art.12). Now fellowship in the full participation of happiness which is the reason for loving one's neighbor, is a greater reason for loving, than the participation of happiness by way of overflow, which is the reason for loving one's own body.*<sup>18</sup>

And elsewhere,

*Our neighbors are not all equally related to God; some are nearer to Him, by reason of their greater goodness, and those we ought, out of charity, to love more than those who are not so near to Him.*<sup>19</sup>

Saint Paul expressly recommends: *"whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith."*<sup>20</sup> And writing to Timothy, he recommends that, if the servants have Catholic masters, they should serve them better than those who are not Catholic, *"because they are faithful and beloved [by God], who are partakers of the benefit [of Redemption]."*<sup>21</sup> And Our Lord proclaimed the same principle when he said: *"Whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother, and my sister, and mother."*<sup>22</sup>

### **Expanding This Doctrine Cannot Harm the Apostolate with Infidels and Heretics**

Let us finally add, to these numerous theoretical arguments, a practical reflection that also has considerable value. If a tally of Catholics and infidels were made in Brazil, one would see that the numerical inferiority of the infidels is overwhelming. What is, therefore, the problem that affects Brazil most basically: the conversion of the infidels or the reconciliation of sinners with the Church?

Do not fear on the other hand, that the development of the works to convert infidels would be hindered as a consequence of the order of ideas we have been expounding. Certainly Germany was one of the countries in which the works for the conversion of the many Protestants existing there were more developed. In fact, the problem of leading Protestants back to the fold of the Church in Germany was incomparably more pressing and important than in Brazil. The German bishops did not believe that these works to

<sup>18</sup> *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.26, art.5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, art.6, ad.2.

<sup>20</sup> Gal. 6:10.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Tim. 6:2.

<sup>22</sup> Mark 3:35.

expand frontiers would suffer any harm because of the following truth which under the designation of "23rd question," appeared in the Catechism officially written by the Venerable German Episcopate:

*Q. What is the cause of grave sins committed even inside the Catholic Church?*

*A. The fact that in the Catholic Church mortal sins are committed is due to the fact that many Catholic Christians do not obey the Church and do not live with her. The sins of her own children hurt her more and **make her expansion more difficult than persecution from enemies of the Church.** "It is impossible not to have scandals but woe to him who gives them (Luke 17:1)."*

A curious fact is that the Nazi government of Baden, in a circular of January 27, 1937, ordered that this question be deleted from the catechism.<sup>23</sup>

### **"Apostolate of Conquest"**

From everything we have just expounded and above all, from the energetic words of the German Episcopate, results with all clarity that the interest for pious souls cannot be separated from the one due to souls of infidels and sinners. Hence one understands how unfounded it is to interpret in an exaggerated literal sense the expression "*apostolate of conquest*," very often used to designate, in a one-sided and exclusive sense, the works for the conversion of the infidels, while at the same time this title is scornfully denied to works for preserving and sanctifying the good.

Undoubtedly, every conversion of infidels expands the Church's frontiers; and since every such expansion is a conquest, these works can reasonably be called "*apostolate of conquest*." In this sense the expression is licit. Yet, while these works are worthy of all enthusiasm, there is an error, and not a small one, in endowing them with some kind of radical exclusiveness that disturbs the lucidity of concepts and the hierarchy of values, unjustifiably casting a mantle of scorn upon other works. Speaking about totalitarian propaganda, Jacques Maritain said that it possessed the art of "*making truths go delirious*." The conversion of infidels is certainly an exciting work and could not be praised enough. But let us not make this noble truth go delirious.

Unfortunately, however, this delirium does exist; and from it spring a passion for the masses and for belittling elites, a one-

---

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Testis Fidelis, *El Cristianismo en el Tercer Reich*. The author of this book—a masterpiece from every standpoint—is a German Catholic priest who used a pen name.

sided mania of wholesale recruiting, an implicit or explicit indifference for works to preserve the faithful, and so on. A curious state of mind is linked to this order of ideas. In some circles, there is such a respectful enthusiasm for converts, that according to the expression of a very keen observer, those who have always been Catholic "*feel a certain shame for never having apostatized so they could be converted.*" Evidently, the return of the prodigal son to his father's house is a cause for overwhelming joy, and his faithful brother's jealousy of him is worthy of criticism. Yet, the fact that someone always persevered is of itself a title of honor greater than an apostasy followed by sincere amendment. Of course a penitent soul could soar much higher than someone else who always remained faithful. However, it would be rash to argue concretely whether more admiration is owed to the innocence of Saint John than the penance of Saint Peter; to the penance of Saint Mary Magdalene or the innocence of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus. Let us put aside these idle questions and serve God with humility, avoiding the exaggeration of turning apostasy into a title of vainglory.

Concern, or rather obsession with the apostolate of conquest generates yet another error that we simply mention for the time being. We will speak about it more at length in a subsequent chapter. It consists in hiding or invariably underestimating the evil in heresies so as to give heretics the idea that the distance that separates them from the Church is small. What is forgotten, however, is that in so doing the malice of heresy is hidden to the faithful and the barriers that separate them from apostasy are leveled! This is what will happen when this method is used extensively or exclusively.

An opinion has been spread that the apostolate of Catholic Action as a consequence of its magic mandate, exercises such a sanctifying effect over souls that mere apostolate activity is entirely sufficient for a member of Catholic Action and excuses him from the interior life.

This chapter has become too long and we do not want to digress even further about this complex matter. So we will limit ourselves to saying that Holy Mother Church demands that clerics and even bishops maintain an interior life all the more intense as their works are absorbing. Hence we see that the apostolate of the hierarchy does not excuse them from interior life. In his treatise, *De consideratione*, Saint Bernard does not hesitate to call "*cursed works*" the activities of the Blessed Pope Eugene III, as long as they would consume the time necessary for that Pontiff to increase his interior life. And he is talking about the sublime and so to speak divine occupations of the Papacy! What could be said, then, of the modest occupations of a mere "*participant*" of

the hierarchy? Could his activities be more sanctifying than those of the hierarchy itself? How could one imagine, in the essence and structure of Catholic Action, the existence of sanctifying virtues that dispense with the interior life!

Finally, we are faced here with an aggravation of the Americanism already condemned by Leo XIII; and a complete refutation of this doctrine can be found in the document about this matter.<sup>24</sup>

\* \* \*

### **An Objection**

One could certainly object, to all this, that "*there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.*"<sup>25</sup> Few passages from the Holy Gospels have been the object of more unfounded interpretations than this one. The woman of the parable, who lost a coin, certainly experienced more joy in finding it than in keeping the coins she had not lost. This does not mean that she would be consoled for losing the other ninety-nine coins by having found one! She would have to be crazy to act like that! What Our Lord wished to say is simply that the joy of recovering the goods we lose is greater than our pleasure for the quiet possession of the goods we keep. Thus, a man who loses his sight in an accident and afterward recovers it should reasonably have a great expansion of joy. However, it would be irrational for a man who was never threatened with blindness to suddenly go into indescribable outbursts of joy because he is not blind.

Think about it: if there is more joy in the heart of the Good Shepherd for the conversion of a sinner than for the perseverance of ninety-nine just men, the logical consequence is that there is more sorrow in the Heart of Jesus for a just man who apostatizes than for ninety-nine sinners who persevere in sin.

---

<sup>24</sup> [Trans.: See Leo XIII's Encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*, Jan. 22, 1899.]

<sup>25</sup> Luke 15:7 (NAB).





## **Part IV**

**How Some in  
Catholic Action  
Propose to  
Disseminate  
the Doctrine of  
the Church**





## Chapter 1

### How to Present Catholic Doctrine

#### **There Is a Great Variety of Souls**

A first observation that occurs to anyone dedicated to the study of souls is the immense variety that the Creator established among them. The human soul is one of the most beautiful and outstanding works of creation, and as God established such a great diversity in the beings of inferior categories, He could not stop from enriching with an immensely greater variety the spiritual souls created in His image and likeness. This diversity of souls found in the literature of all peoples, in the pen of the keenest observers, is nowhere manifested in a more objective and eloquent way than in Sacred Scripture. In it all the passions capable of stirring man appear in the fullness of their pathetic intensity. Some are moved by affection, some by the love of riches, some even by hatred, by a passion for command, by a thirst for science, by the emotions of art, etc. And this great natural variety is matched by a great variety of attitudes of the soul in relation to God. While some seem more inclined to adore the goodness of God, others are more sensitive to his dazzling power, the depth of his knowledge, etc.

#### **Implicitly, There Must Be a Great Variety of Approaches in the Apostolate**

We can deduce from all this that it is absolutely impossible to expect that the many people dedicated to the task of the apostolate always use the same words or the same methods in their action. In addition to the natural impossibility of expecting identical effects from different causes, there is a supernatural impediment. Indeed, grace, which "*does not destroy nature but perfects it,*" far from destroying the variety of souls, in a sense makes it sharper, so that if from a certain point of view there is nothing so similar as two saints, from another point of view, nothing is so different.

This diversity of character among people dedicated to the apostolate, far from harming the Church, is a providential means for her to be able to speak with the same efficacy to all souls.

While some are moved above all by sweetness, others are moved mainly by fear; while some are touched by simplicity, others are thrilled by the splendor of genius joined with Holiness; while

some are called to conversion by God through suffering, others are attracted by God through the way of honors and consolations. Were we to follow the modern tendencies of standardization and rationalization by seeking to have only one type of apostle, we would sadly fail. Because the richness of the work God created will not allow itself to be compressed or impoverished by the arbitrary elaboration of our imagination and by the subjective panorama of reality that we would have fabricated.

### **A "Technique of Apostolate" That Fails to Take This Fundamental Truth into Account Will Err**

Yet, some overly narrow conceptions that exist in some circles of Catholic Action lead straight to this error. By accepting the methods proposed in those circles, one would say that the vast majority of souls existing outside the Church is reduced to only one type of person, ideally well-intentioned and candid, in whose interior no voluntary obstacle is raised against the Faith, and who is kept away from the Church by a simple misunderstanding of a speculative or sentimental kind.

Once this arbitrary conception is established, all pastoral wisdom is reduced to enlightening people's minds and attracting their souls, something that must obviously be done slowly, with extreme tact and in diluted doses, so that these souls, *"climbing slowly from clarity to clarity, may be reconciled with their inner selves and may finally attain, almost without realizing it, and as if through an ingenious trap, the possession of truth and of interior transparency."*

### **"Strategic Retreat," the Only Method of Apostolate**

Whence comes a whole technique which, once adopted officially in Catholic Action, would become the canonization of human prudence and human respect. The first principle of wisdom would consist in avoiding systematically anything that legitimately or not could cause the least difference of opinion. Placed in a non-Catholic atmosphere, a member of Catholic Action should only—and particularly at the beginning—point out the common traits between him and those present, while cautiously remaining silent about the differences. In other words, the beginning of any maneuver of apostolate would consist in creating large areas of *"mutual understanding"* between Catholics and non-Catholics, placing both on common, neutral and friendly ground, however broad and vague it might be.

And since unbelievers often profess but a very reduced minimum of principles in common with ours, charity and wisdom would

mandate that we hide the religious nature of our works so as to attract them to the practice of Religion in a surreptitious way. Let us give an example. In documents promoting Catholic Action, it would be preferable to mention words such as "*truth*," "*virtue*," "*good*," "*charity*," in an absolutely non-religious sense. If in certain situations it is possible to advance further, one should speak about God, but without pronouncing the adorable name of Jesus Christ. If it is possible to speak about Jesus Christ, it should be done, but without mentioning the Holy Catholic Church. When speaking of Catholicism, it should be done in a way so as to give an idea that it is an accommodating Religion with vague doctrinal limits that do not entail a profound separation of camps. All this is tantamount to saying that the agnostic language of the Rotary Club, the deist language of Freemasonry, and the pan-Christian language of the YMCA are but masks that Catholic Action should use according to circumstances, being more effective for the apostolate than an open and bold Catholic language.

As a rigorous consequence, some people formally reject, pass over in silence, and seem to forget and ignore all the passages of Sacred Scripture, all of the writings of the Fathers and Doctors, all papal documents and all episodes of Catholic hagiography, as long as they make the apology of courage, energy, and the spirit of combativeness. They try to see religion with only one eye; and when the eye that sees justice is closed to leave open only the one that sees mercy, the latter is immediately disturbed and drags man to the rash presumption of saving himself and others, without merits.

### **The Cross of Christ Does Not Drive Neophytes Away from Catholic Action**

Another great worry consists in hiding everything that can give non-Catholics or the indifferent, the idea that the Church is a school of suffering and sacrifice. Austere truths are strictly proscribed. Not a word is said of mortification, penance, or expiation. All they talk about are the delights of spiritual life. Accordingly, they see it as hardly useful, not to say completely inept, to try to attract non-believers by telling them, for example, about the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. They wish that only and exclusively Christ the King and Christ Glorious and Triumphant be spoken of, as the humiliations of the Garden and of Golgotha would scare souls away. Only the delights of Tabor could effectively attract. A certain priest once told us that in the sacristy of an old, still Masonic-influenced confraternity, he found on the door the following sign: "*It is forbidden to speak of*

Hell." The same prohibition is in effect in those circles.<sup>1</sup> For the same reason they also tend to consider Holy Week much more like a joyous commemoration that announces the triumph of Easter, than a set of ceremonies designed to move the faithful with compassion for the Redeemer and lamentation for their own sins.

### **These Doctrines Are Erroneous Because They Presuppose a False Panorama**

The first observation we must formulate in relation to so many errors, is that they spring from the false premise that all, or almost all the souls separated from the Church are in the same psychological situation, that is, having no interior obstacles other than purely intellectual or sentimental ones, they await for the strategic therapeutics of Catholic Action in order to be saved. And this is why the idea that only one method of apostolate can be used by Catholic Action—that of half truths, half measures and half words—is false.

We do not deny that one or the other soul outside the Church could find itself in the situation described above, and that some of these souls—though not all—could be led to the truth solely through this method of temporization and procrastination.

It is, however, a serious error to suppose that the great majority of those outside the Church are separated from her by mere intellectual prejudices and emotional misunderstandings.

Like it or not, even in the baptized, original sin left serious and deplorable effects not only in the intellect but even in the will and sensibility. Consequently, all men feel an inclination to evil they can vanquish only by fighting, at times heroically. To demonstrate it we must not seek examples in the inevitable fights against their own inclinations by sinners just emerging from a life full of vice. A quick look at the lives of Saints is enough for us to see that even after many years practicing the most

---

<sup>1</sup> It is most important to note that the Sacred Council of Trent teaches: "*If anyone says that the fear of hell, whereby, by grieving for sins we flee to the mercy of God or abstain from sinning, is a sin or makes sinners worse, let him be anathema.*" (Can. 818.)

While this text is not immediately applicable to our case, the way the same Council defines the truth opposed to that error is an indirect denial of the assertion that one must not preach about hell and the punishments that await sinners after death. Says the Council: "*...peccatores...a divinae justitiae timore...utiliter conculuntur*" (Can. 798). Thus, no one can deny that it is "*useful to move sinners by way of the fear of justice.*"

Thus, how can one forbid or advise Catholic circles against doing so, as long as one refrains from going from one extreme to the other, that is, from an exclusive contemplation of God's kindness to an exclusive apprehension of his severity?

Of course we do not deny that meditation on the eternal punishments can be unequally useful: most profitable for some and less so for others. Generally, however, except for certain special spiritual states or pathological cases, this subject is always useful and should always be treated with clarity and emphasis.



austere virtue and having already acquired a high degree of intimacy with God, they were forced to do extreme violence against themselves so as to refrain from committing highly censurable actions. Saint Benedict, retired from the world and completely given to divine contemplation, had to roll over thorns to extinguish the concupiscence that would drag him to sin. Saint Bernard threw himself into a lake to obtain the same victory. At ninety years of age, Saint Alphonsus De Liguori, a Bishop, Doctor of the Church and founder of a Religious Congregation, still felt the assaults of concupiscence. So we understand the difficulties that original sin creates for the fulfillment of Catholic doctrine by the faithful; difficulties so great, that Catholic morality is decidedly superior to human strength alone, and it is a heresy to maintain that it is possible for man, on his own strength and without the supernatural help of grace, to practice all the Commandments in a lasting way. Summing up all we have said, and to show that we are not exaggerating, let us conclude with the words of Leo XIII. The great Pope said that to follow the Catholic morality

*oftentimes calls for strenuous labour, earnest endeavour, and perseverance! For although by Our Redeemer's grace human nature hath been regenerated, still there remains in each individual a certain debility and tendency to evil.*

*Various natural appetites attract man on one side and the other; the allurements of the material world impel his soul to follow after what is pleasant rather than the law of Christ. Still we must strive our best and resist our natural inclinations with all our strength "unto the obedience of Christ."...In this contest every man must be prepared to undergo hardships and troubles for Christ's sake. It is difficult to reject what so powerfully entices and delights. It is hard and painful to despise the supposed goods of the senses and of fortune for the will and precepts of Christ our Lord. But the Christian is absolutely obliged to be firm, and patient in suffering, if he wish to lead a Christian life.<sup>2</sup>*

In Scripture there are many passages that confirm the affirmation of the great Leo XIII: "...for the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth," the Holy Ghost warns.<sup>3</sup>

Up to now we have only talked about the obstacles created by original sin for man. How much more cogent our arguments will be, if we also take diabolical temptations into account!

---

<sup>2</sup> Leo XIII, *Tametsi Futura Prospicientibus*, no. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 8:21.

If the life of a faithful Catholic entails so much fighting, it is easy to understand how an unbeliever would be averse to the sheer perspective of its observance and to the considerable obstacles that his will must face before making, together with the intellect, an act of faith. Now then, if many of the faithful, albeit supported by a superabundance of grace inside the Church, fail to persevere in the way of virtue and at times even become apostates and cruel enemies of Jesus Christ, infidels—often comforted by smaller graces—would be led much more easily to turn against the Church or against Catholics in an attitude of malevolence more or less conscious or explicit, and sometimes even spiteful: a far cry from the exclusively dovish and non-resentful stance that certain Catholic Action circles attribute to infidels.

Hence in the apostolate struggle, an atmosphere of battle will exist until the end of time—lived saintly on our part, sometimes satanically on the part of our adversaries. Indeed, Scripture says that *"The just abhor the wicked man: and the wicked loathe them that are in the right way."*<sup>4</sup> This is the realization of the inexorable enmity created by God Himself, and therefore very strong, that separates the children of the Blessed Virgin from those of the serpent: *"Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem."*<sup>5</sup>

Because of that, *"good is set against evil, and life against death: so also is the sinner against a just man. And so look upon all the works of the Most High. Two and two, and one against another."*<sup>6</sup>

But the erroneous conception we have been fighting reduces the greater part of the *"sentimental misunderstandings"* to this: that the infidels are victims, not culprits.

On the eve of his conversion, the great Augustine still felt very strong moral obstacles, caused by concupiscence, and in his admirable Confessions he tells us the titanic fight he had to wage before reaching the safe harbor of the Church. And, as a rule, this is the testimony of all that convert—conversions themselves generally the fruit of tragic events—that reason fights against the most vehement inclination of the senses to evil. Much rarer are the souls that convert without effort and struggle, almost without feeling it; because, unfortunately, the number of men enslaved by passions of all kinds is much greater.

## **And So They Fail to Employ Resources of Great Importance**

---

<sup>4</sup> Prov. 29:27.

<sup>5</sup> "I will put enmities between thee and the woman" (Gen. 3:15).

<sup>6</sup> Eccles. 33:15.

Now, when the will clings so doggedly to its own errors, it often happens that only an objective, frank and apostolic description of the ugliness of its actions can attain the desired effect. Examples in this line abound in Sacred Scripture and the prophets' admonitions against the sins of Babylon, Niniveh, and those of the people of God itself, far from seeking "*common ground*," constitute a terrible separation of camps in which the dazzling clarity of true morals is opposed in a cruel contrast by all the abjection of paganism or the stark ingratitude of the children of God.

It would be a serious error to pretend that the New Testament suppressed these raw manifestations of the truth. To those who asked him about the way of virtue, Saint John the Baptist did not answer seeking to create the famous "common ground." On the contrary, he said: "*Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come?...For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.*"<sup>7</sup>

Saint John the Baptist frankly told Herod the famous "*non licet tibi*"<sup>8</sup> which he paid for with his life. Was this tactic harmful? No. On the contrary, the Gospel tells us that his prestige with Herod was great and that Herod defended him against his enemies: "*Now Herodias laid snares for him: and was desirous to put him to death, and could not. For Herod **feared** John, knowing him to be a just and holy man: and kept him, and when he heard him, did many things: and he heard him willingly.*"<sup>9</sup> Evidently both the prophets and Saint John the Baptist took attitudes inspired by the Holy Ghost to gain the greatest advantages for those wayward souls: therefore, they could not have erred.

### **...Resources Our Lord Employed**

If Our Lord scourged the vendors in the Temple, he did so in the interest of their souls; and when He called the Pharisees a brood of vipers and white-washed sepulchers, he had the intention of doing good to these wayward souls. The same happened with those who gave scandal, of whom He said it would be better for them to have a millstone tied around their necks and be thrown into the depths of the sea: his merciful purpose was certainly to stop some of them at the edge of sin. And when He covered with threats the ungrateful cities of Jerusalem, Corozaim and Bethsaida, He did so

---

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 3:7,10.

<sup>8</sup> "It is not lawful for thee" (Mark 6:18).

<sup>9</sup> Mark 6:19-20. (Our emphasis.)

to forewarn all future peoples against the same sin of ingratitude.

As for Apologetics, just glancing at the great pages of the Fathers and Doctors and examining, for example, the magnificent haughtiness with which Saint Augustine, in the *City of God*, ridicules all the miseries of paganism, suffices to understand how the best apologists in their wisdom judged this method indispensable for adequately defending Holy Church. To be sure, this method is very different from building "*common ground*."

Since Scripture in general and particularly the New Testament is usually read with a deplorable one-sidedness, at the end of this book we will quote a series of passages that constitute a rebuke of the systematical use of the famous "*common ground*" tactic.

### **...Whose Rejection the Holy See Condemned**

The analysis of this subject would be incomplete if we did not add another reflection. Practiced only in exceptional cases, the tactic we examined can be considered a legitimate and effective tool of charity. Made into a general rule it easily degenerates into human respect and hypocrisy, calling upon us the scorn of our enemies. The Holy See expressly condemned this error. Here is what His Holiness Pope Leo XIII said about this tactic of perpetual retreat:

*To recoil before an enemy, or to keep silence when from all sides such clamors are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character or who entertains doubt as to the truth of what he professes to believe. In both cases such mode of behaving is base and is insulting to God, and both are incompatible with the salvation of mankind. This kind of conduct is profitable only to the enemies of the faith, for nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good..*

*After all, no one can be prevented from putting forth that strength of soul which is the characteristic of true Christians, and very frequently by such display of courage our enemies lose heart and their designs are thwarted. Christians are, moreover, born for combat, whereof the greater the vehemence, the more assured, God aiding, the triumph: "Have confidence; I have overcome the world(John 16:33)"<sup>10</sup>*

Furthermore, the Holy Ghost censured excessive compromise bordering on untruthfulness: "*They that say to the wicked man: Thou art just: shall be cursed by the people, and the tribes shall*

---

<sup>10</sup> Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae*, no. 14.

*abhor them. They that rebuke him, shall be praised: and a blessing shall come upon them.*"<sup>11</sup>

In fact, in the fight between militant adversaries nothing is more apt to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and even admiration than profound and strong convictions expressed without arrogance but with the courageous directness of one who possesses the truth and is not ashamed of it; convictions expressed in an explicit, crystal clear manner and defended with airtight argumentation. How filled with admiration were the pagans who packed the Roman Circus and the Coliseum at the bold professions of Faith of the martyrs, so opposed to the spirit of paganism and which shocked the whole ambience so strongly, but at the same time were covered with the splendor of loyalty and the prestige of blood! What an admiration the Moors had for the heroic crusaders, who fought like lions but were as meek as lambs when facing a wounded or dying adversary. With what contempt, on the contrary, we have fulminated the Protestant propaganda that tries to use against us methods so fashionable in certain circles of Catholic Action. They have called themselves "*spiritualists*," "*Christians*," even "*free Catholics*" with the specific purpose of creating an ambiguous "*common ground*" so as to fish in muddy waters. Let us not imitate the very methods we fight, let us not turn perpetual retreat, the invariable use of ambiguous terms, and the constant habit of hiding our Faith into norms of conduct that would ultimately result in the triumph of human respect.

Addressing an association that wished to reform its bylaws so as to hide its Catholic nature and obtain greater advantages, Pius X wrote:

*it is neither loyal nor dignified, to hide, covering it with a deceptive flag, the quality of Catholic, as if Catholicism were damaged merchandise, which should be smuggled. Let the Socio-economic Union display therefore, courageously the Catholic flag and keep firmly the present statutes. Will the objectives of the Federation be obtained this way? We shall give thanks for that to the Lord. Will our wish be vain? At least there will remain Catholic unions, which will keep the spirit of Jesus Christ and the Lord shall bless.*<sup>12</sup>

His Holiness Pope Pius X repeated the same thought to Father Ciceri in a letter of October 20, 1912: "*truth wants no disguise, and our flag must be unfurled.*"<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Prov. 24:24-25.

<sup>12</sup> St. Pius X, Letter to Count Medaloga Albani.

<sup>13</sup> St. Pius X, Letter to Father Ciceri, Oct. 20, 1912.

Scripture says there is nothing new under the sun. Unfortunately, this affirmation is true particularly in regard to errors. They repeat themselves periodically. Thus, the present problem seemed to be very much in evidence in the pontificate of Pius X. Not only regarding the apostolate of works—we saw how the Socio-Economic Union attracted a reprimand to itself in this regard—but this question was placed also in the field of science. Many Catholic scientists, led by the wish to avoid friction with naturalist scientists as much as possible, let themselves be fooled by the hope that by making some concessions it would be possible to develop a fruitful apostolate. Also in the political field, many public men judged that by not asserting certain rights of the Church, or by doing so in a very limited way, they would obtain an era of peace for Catholicism.

In terms that may well solve our problem, which is essentially the same, the most suave but zealous Pontiff undid these illusions. Let us listen to him:

*the error is worse when men deceive themselves with the idea of gaining an ephemeral peace by cloaking the rights and interests of the Church, by sacrificing them to private interests, by minimizing them unjustly, by truckling to the world, "the whole of which is seated in wickedness" (1 John 5: 19) on the pretext of reconciling the followers of novelties and bringing them back to the Church, as though any composition were possible between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. This hallucination is as old as the world, but it is always modern and always present in the world so long as there are soldiers who are timid or treacherous, and at the first onset ready to throw down their arms or open negotiations with the enemy, who is the irreconcilable enemy of God and man.<sup>14</sup>*

Pius X evidently believes there are cases "at times," when some temporizing would be just. For this reason, in another topic of the same encyclical, while employing a very careful language that we emphasize in bold, His Holiness adds: "Not indeed that it is not well **at times** to waive our rights **as far as** may lawfully be done and as the good of souls requires."<sup>15</sup>

In another encyclical the Holy Father deals with the same subject:

*How mistaken are those who think they are doing service to the Church, and producing fruit for the salvation of souls, when by a kind of prudence of the flesh they show themselves liberal in concessions to science falsely so called, under the fatal illusion that they are thus able more easily to win over those in*

---

<sup>14</sup> St. Pius X, *Communium Rerum*, no. 30.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 31.

error, but really with the continual danger of being themselves lost. The truth is one, and it cannot be halved; it lasts for ever, and is not subject to the vicissitudes of the times. "Jesus Christ, today and yesterday, and the same for ever" (Hebr. 13: 8).

And so too are all they seriously mistaken who, occupying themselves with the welfare of the people, and especially upholding the cause of the lower classes, seek to promote above all else the material well-being of the body and of life, but are utterly silent about their spiritual welfare and the very serious duties which their profession as Christians enjoins upon them. They are not ashamed to conceal sometimes, as though with a veil, certain fundamental maxims of the Gospel, for fear lest otherwise the people refuse to hear and follow them. It will certainly be the part of prudence to proceed gradually in laying down the truth, when one has to do with men completely strangers to us and completely separated from God. "Before using the steel, let the wounds be felt with a light hand," as Gregory said (Registr. v. 44 (18) ad Joannem episcop.). **But even this carefulness would sink to mere prudence of the flesh, were it proposed as the rule of constant and everyday action** - all the more since such a method would seem not to hold in due account that Divine Grace which sustains the sacerdotal ministry and which is given not only to those who exercise this ministry, but to all the faithful of Christ in order that our words and our action may find an entrance into their heart. Gregory did not at all understand this prudence, either in the preaching of the Gospel, or in the many wonderful works undertaken by him to relieve misery. He did constantly what the Apostles had done, for they, when they went out for the first time into the world to bring into it the name of Christ, repeated the saying: "We preach Christ crucified, a scandal for the Jews, a folly for the Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:23). If ever there was a time in which human prudence seemed to offer the only expedient for obtaining something in a world altogether unprepared to receive doctrines so new, so repugnant to human passions, so opposed to the civilization, then at its most flourishing period, of the Greeks and the Romans, that time was certainly the epoch of the preaching of the faith. But the Apostles disdained such prudence, because they understood well the precept of God: "It pleased God by the foolishness of our preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21). And as it ever was, so it is today, this foolishness "to them that are saved, that is, to us, is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). The scandal of the Crucified will ever furnish us in the future, as it has done in the past, with the most potent of all weapons; now as of yore in that sign we shall find victory.

But, Venerable Brethren, this weapon will lose much of its efficacy or be altogether useless in the hands of men not accustomed to the interior life with Christ, not educated in the

*school of true and solid piety, not thoroughly inflamed with zeal for the glory of God and for the propagation of His kingdom.*<sup>16</sup>

In this last item His Holiness gives us the profound reason for so much human prudence, so much temporizing, in a word, so much desire not to fight: the battle of the apostolate is waged with supernatural weapons that are tempered only in the forge of interior life. Once this interior life is weakened, forgotten, and diminished by the multiple doctrines mentioned in preceding chapters the result would not delay to be felt in the field of apostolate strategy, producing the fruits of liberalism and naturalism that are there.

### **It Is Severely Punished by God**

May God deliver us from the just wrath that those deviations may cause Him. This wrath can assume frightening proportions. No one ignores the high degree of splendor reached by the Roman Empire of the West. Now, its grandiose civilization—one of the greatest in history—died precisely by the wrath that this endless temporization of Catholics with evil provoked in God. Temples, palaces, thermae, aqueducts, libraries, circuses, theaters, everything crumbled. Why? According to Saint Augustine, there were three causes for the fall of the Roman Empire of the West, and among them was the cowardice of Catholics fighting the disorders of paganism. They adopted the tactic of human prudence, half truths and the "common ground." Because of this, God punished them with an invasion of barbarians that turned out to be one of the most terrible trials in the whole history of the Church. By the enormity of the chastisement we can gauge well the seriousness of the guilt. Saint Augustine says:

*Where can we readily find a man who holds in fit and just estimation those persons on account of whose revolting pride, luxury, and avarice, and cursed iniquities and impiety, God now smites the earth as His predictions threatened? Where is the man who lives with them in the style in which it becomes us to live with them? For often we wickedly blind ourselves to the occasions of teaching and admonishing them, sometimes even of reprimanding and chiding them, either because we shrink from the labor or are ashamed to offend them, or because we fear to lose good friendships, lest this should stand in the way of our advancement, or injure us in some worldly matter, which either our covetous disposition desires to obtain, or our weakness shrinks from losing.*

---

<sup>16</sup> St. Pius X, Encyclical *Jucunda Sane*, Mar. 12, 1904, nos. 25-27, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_12031904\\_iucunda-sane\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_12031904_iucunda-sane_en.html)



So that, although the conduct of wicked men is distasteful to the good, and therefore they do not fall with them into that damnation which in the next life awaits such persons, yet, because they spare their damnable sins through fear, therefore, even though their own sins be slight and venial, they are justly scourged with the wicked in this world, though in eternity they quite escape punishment. Justly, when God afflicts them in common with the wicked, do they find this life bitter, through love of whose sweetness they declined to be bitter to these sinners.

If any one forbears to reprove and find fault with those who are doing wrong, because he seeks a more seasonable opportunity, or because he fears they may be made worse by his rebuke, or that other weak persons may be disheartened from endeavoring to lead a good and pious life, and may be driven from the faith; this man's omission seems to be occasioned not by covetousness, but by a charitable consideration. But what is blame-worthy is, that they who themselves revolt from the conduct of the wicked, and live in quite another fashion, yet spare those faults in other men which they ought to reprehend and wean them from; and spare them because they fear to give offence, lest they should injure their interests in those things which good men may innocently and legitimately use--though they use them more greedily than becomes persons who are strangers in this world, and profess the hope of a heavenly country.

For not only the weaker brethren who enjoy married life, and have children (or desire to have them), and own houses and establishments, whom the apostle addresses in the churches, warning and instructing them how they should live, both the wives with their husbands, and the husbands with their wives, the children with their parents, and parents with their children, and servants with their masters, and masters with their servants -- not only do these weaker brethren gladly obtain and grudgingly lose many earthly and temporal things on account of which they dare not offend men whose polluted and wicked life greatly displeases them; but those also who live at a higher level, who are not entangled in the meshes of married life, but use meager food and raiment, do often take thought of their own safety and good name, and abstain from finding fault with the wicked, because they fear their wiles and violence. And although they do not fear them to such an extent as to be drawn to the commission of like iniquities, nay, not by any threats or violence soever; yet those very deeds which they refuse to share in the commission of they often decline to find fault with, when possibly they might by finding fault prevent their commission. They abstain from interference, because they fear that, if it fail of good effect, their own safety or reputation may be damaged or destroyed; not because they see that their preservation and good name are needful, that they may be able to influence those who need their instruction, but rather because they weakly relish the flattery and respect of men, and fear the judgments of the

*people, and the pain or death of the body; that is to say, their non-intervention is the result of selfishness, and not of love.*<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> St. Augustine, *City of God*, Bk 1, ch. 9, at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120101.htm>

## Chapter 2

### The "Common Ground" Tactic

#### The "*Common Ground*" Tactic and Religious Indifferentism

One can never over emphasize the fact that the above-described tactic is praised and recommended not only for use in individual talks, but also in newspapers, magazines, lectures, placards and in a word, in every promotional activity of Catholic Action. Some circles of Catholic Action worry exclusively about the effect of their words over souls placed outside the fold of the Church because they underestimate, in favor of the so-called "*apostolate of conquest*," the apostolate to make the good more fervent and waging a preventive combat against error in the ambiances still preserved from it. In the preceding chapter we placed ourselves in the same field for the sake of argument but looked only at the ominous effects that such a strategy might bring if hoisted as a regular means of apostolate. However, the practice of apostolate does not place us only in the presence of people whose souls need to be purified from some error in order to introduce some truth. In our time, superficiality, immediacy, and disregard for everything that does not produce material gain have multiplied the number of people totally indifferent to everything and devoid of any ideas about Religion. They are souls able to listen to most vigorous attacks against certain enemies of the Church without prejudice or irritation, and who will hold the Church in higher esteem if a vigorous apologetic unveils before their eyes the secondary reasons for which the Church is usually attacked. We do not see how it would be possible to help one of these souls—for example, a free-thinker or a totally indifferent, worldly person—by not acting in this frank and apostolic way, which would elevate the Church in their concepts and at the same time immunize them against a possible assault from the partisans of evil.

#### The "*Common Ground*" Tactic and Fervent Catholics

As for environments that are already Catholic, the most important consists in teaching truth rather than fighting error. In other words, it is better to have a solid knowledge of the Catechism than some training in the fights of apologetics. However, it is perfectly feasible to join one advantage to the other, and it will always be praiseworthy to engage in showing the children of light all the dark intellectual and moral abjection

that prevails in the kingdom of darkness. How many prodigal sons would renounce their criminal abandonment of the home if a prudent counselor warned them of the innumerable risks to which they expose themselves by leaving their father's domains! The abyss separating the Church from heresy and the state of grace from mortal sin is immense; and it will always be an outstanding work of mercy to show unwary Catholics the frightening magnitude of this abyss so they do not plunge inconsiderately into its depths.

In view of all this, and since, as we have shown, the highest interests of the Church and the gravest obligations of charity lead preferably to act upon brothers in the Faith, we reach the conclusion that it is a serious error to make the famous "*common ground*" tactic the dominant and exclusive note of Catholic Action's outreach.

Imagine the concrete effect on our Catholic masses of a promotional campaign whose exclusive and invariable leitmotiv would be that we are separated from Protestantism only by a tenuous barrier; that we are all linked by a common Faith in Jesus Christ and that the bonds between us are much greater than the barriers. Whoever succeeded in making this tactic prevail among Catholics would certainly deserve a great decoration from Protestants.

A curious example of the danger the Holy See finds in this tactic of constantly emphasizing existing analogies between Catholic doctrine and the fragments of truth that exist in all errors can be seen in the express and radical proscription of the expression "*Catholic socialism*" by His Holiness Pope Pius XI in the encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*.

As everyone knows, the term "*socialism*" served as common denominator for all social and anti-individualistic currents running the full gamut from some clearly conservative nuances all the way to communism. Thus, as Leo XIII had presented himself as radically anti-individualistic, the expression "*Catholic socialism*" opened a "*common ground*" between all anti-individualist doctrines and the Church. From the viewpoint of compromise, the expression had the advantage of not further affecting relations between Catholics and individualists, already irremediably broken as a consequence of previous attitudes of the Holy See. Nevertheless, Pius XI surprised the many advocates of compromise by breaking with, and proscribing, this ambiguous term because of the evil meaning that could be attributed to it.

## **The True Attitude**

In this area, as in all others *"oportet haec facere et illa non omitere."* One must be objective and truthful first and above all else. Let us not hide the abyss that separates all that is Catholic from what is not, an immense and profound abyss it would be mortally dangerous to not see. On the other hand, let us not also reject the vestiges of our truths that could have survived amid the errors of the adversary. But let us always be careful, in our speech, to never take attitudes that might harm the perseverance of the good and their horror of heresy, on the pretext of conquering the wicked. Besides, the value of some fragments of good or truth that may have been kept among heretics is much less than what is thought. In this sense, let us see, for example, what Saint Thomas teaches about Faith.

*-Can infidels make acts of Faith?*

*-No sir; because they do not believe in Revelation, in other words because ignoring it they do not place themselves confidently in the hands of God, nor subject themselves to what He demands of them or because, knowing it, they refuse to render consent to it. (10)*

*-Can impious men do it?*

*-No they cannot do it either, because, even though they consider as certain the revealed truths founded in the divine veracity, their faith is not an effect of respect and submission to God, Whom they hate, though they are obliged to confess Him against their will. (5, 2, ad 2)*

*-Is it possible that there are men without supernatural faith, and that they believe this way?*

*-Yes, sir; and in this they imitate the faith of the demons (5, 2).*

*-Can heretics believe with supernatural faith?*

*-No sir, because though they admit some revealed truths, they do not base their consent on divine authority, but on their own judgment (5, 3)*

*-Therefore, are heretics farther away from the true faith than the impious men and even than the demons?*

*-Yes sir; because they despise what they had believed in virtue of the divine word (12).*

*-Can sinners believe with supernatural faith?*

*-They can as long as they keep the faith as a supernatural virtue, and can have it, though in an imperfect state even when as an effect of mortal sin they are deprived of charity (4, 2, ad 4).*

-Therefore, not all mortal sins destroy the faith?

-No, sir (10, 1, ad 4).<sup>1</sup>

His Holiness Pope Benedict XV wrote in a letter to the author that he knew "how to accommodate within the reach of both wise and ignorant, the treasures of that eminent genius (Saint Thomas Aquinas) by synthesizing in clear, brief and concise formulas, what he wrote more largely and abundantly." It is, thus a summary of great authority, which excuses us from quoting Saint Thomas more extensively.

\* \* \*

Before going to another aspect of the matter, we would like to emphasize that the great and very wise Saint Ignatius prescribed a rule of conduct that is precisely the opposite of the famous, exclusive "common ground" tactic. The Saint said that when in an epoch a tendency exists to exaggerate a certain truth, a diligent apostle should not talk too much about this truth, but above all speak of the opposite truth. Are people exaggerating when talking about grace? Speak about free will. And so on. The more intelligent this proceeding is, the more efficacious and sure it will be.

### **An Important Reservation**

This obviously does not mean that collaborating with some adversaries against other more terrible ones should invariably be rejected. Although history shows the inefficacy of this conduct in many cases, there are others—albeit rare—in which it is advisable. Thus, His Holiness Pope Pius XI recommended and praised the cooperation against communism of all who believe in God. But this cooperation must be put into practice with common sense, avoiding exaggerated and unwholesome enthusiasms and above all without creating confusion between the camp of truth and that of error on the pretext of fighting even worse errors. Indeed, as soon as Catholics become sleepy enough to accept more or less ambiguous formulas of cooperation, this will be exploited by their allies and compromise the whole work in common. To show that we do not err by raising this hypothesis, let us argue with the most modern of examples: Nazism, a great contemporary heresy certainly more important for the Church at present than Protestantism, Spiritism, the schismatic church, etc. Nazi leaders in Germany were quick to perceive how suitable it was for them to come up with the excuse

---

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Tomas Pegues, O.P. *A Summa Theologica em forma de Catecismo*, pp. 92-93.

of a single united front against communism; and the generic expression, "*belief in God*," presented as a common ground between Catholics and Nazis wound up by covering the most infamous mystifications, to such a point that it became necessary to warn the faithful against the ambiguity of certain Nazi documents. Here is a translation of one of the leaflets in this regard distributed by the German Catholic movement:

*The hour for decision has arrived. Everyone will be asked: Do you believe in God or profess Faith in Christ and his Church? In the new tally of religions, believing in God does not have the sense of our first article of Faith. Today, believing in God means only believing in Him as Turks or Hottentots do; and it also means rejecting Jesus Christ and His Church. Anyone who accepts such a God has denied Christ and separated himself from the Catholic Church. The time to decide has come. Thus, when you are asked individually if you believe in God, the hour will have come for you to make a profession of Faith without hesitation, subterfuge or compromise: "I am a Catholic, I do not only believe in God, but also in Jesus Christ and His Church."*<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, in his Encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, against Nazism, His Holiness Pope Pius XI lays out a lengthy argumentation to prove that anyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ Our Lord does not have a true belief in God; and anyone who does not believe in the Church, does not really believe in Jesus Christ.

### **Let Us Not Hide the Austerity of Our Religion**

The affirmation that Catholic Action should hide, in its apostolate, all the truths that might perchance turn away souls because of their austerity, deserves an equal reservation. Terms or expressions that might give the idea that the life of the faithful is one of fight should be carefully avoided so as to fully cloak under joyful appearances the sufferings imposed on those who follow Jesus Christ. This is not how the Divine Savior acted. He declared more than once that the Cross is the necessary companion of anyone wishing to follow Him. Nor did the Apostles act in this fashion. His Holiness Pope Benedict XV thus praises Saint Paul:

*To make men know Jesus Christ better and better, and to make that knowledge have a bearing, moreover, not only on their faith, but on their lives as well, was the object of that apostolic man's every endeavor. This was the object of every throb of his apostolic heart. Therefore all Christ's doctrines and commands,*

---

<sup>2</sup> Testis Fidelis, *Christianity in the Third Reich*, vol. 2, p. 103.

even the sterner ones, were so proclaimed by St. Paul that he did not restrict, gloss over or tone down what Christ taught regarding humility, self-denial, chastity, contempt of the world, obedience, forgiveness of enemies, and the like, nor was he afraid to tell his hearers that they had to make a choice between the service of God and the service of Belial, for they could not serve both, that when they leave this world, a dread judgment awaits them; that they cannot bargain with God; they may hope for life everlasting if they keep His entire law, but if they neglect their duty and indulge their passions, they will have nothing to expect but eternal fire. For our "Preacher of truth" never imagined that he should avoid such subjects, because, owing to the corruption of the age, they appeared too stern to his hearers. Therefore it is clear how unworthy of commendation are those preachers who are afraid to touch upon certain points of Christian doctrine lest they should give their hearers offense. Does a physician prescribe useless remedies to his patient, merely because the sick man rejects effective ones? The test of the orator's power and skill is his success in making his hearers accept the stern truth he is preaching....Lastly, what end did St. Paul have in his preaching? Not to please men, but Christ. "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." [Gal. 1:10]<sup>3</sup>

As can be seen, this precious rule of conduct for preachers who speak in the name of the Church could not fail to apply to the lay apostle as well, entirely dispelling any possible doubt in this regard. He should, therefore, aspire with all his heart that his interior life be such that he can incite all men to do penance, with these magnificent words: "*With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.*"<sup>4</sup>

One could object that since oratory and apostolate are made to attract, they should not deal with subjects that repel by their very nature. This is an erroneous argument, rejected by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in a resolution of June 28, 1917:

*the preacher should not covet the applause of his listeners, but should strive exclusively for the salvation of souls, the approval of God and of the Church. Saint Jerome used to say that teaching in the Church should not raise acclamations of the people but moaning; and the tears of listeners are the praise of the preacher.*

It seems to us that no one could have expressed himself more clearly. In other words, the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ "by

---

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XV, Encyclical *Humani Generis*, June 15, 1917, no. 19, [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xv/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_enc\\_15061917\\_humani-generis-redemptionem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xv/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xv_enc_15061917_humani-generis-redemptionem_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> Gal. 2:19-20.



*Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world,"* should never be left out in preaching.<sup>5</sup>

### **Let Us Not Deify Popularity**

As for the fear of offending heretics with a bold speech, we must emphasize that Catholic doctrine certainly prescribes that we must act with charity and even make heroic sacrifices if necessary to avoid anything that could displease our separated brethren. But the interests of our separated brethren themselves and the rights of just souls thirsty for the truth should never be sacrificed to this fear of displeasing others. Attitudes capable of irritating them are often indispensable for the apostolate and are therefore frankly praiseworthy. The most obvious common sense shows that there are occasions when it becomes necessary to displease men, and at times many men, so as to serve God, following Saint Paul's example. This is typically the case seen in the Gospel in regard to Our Lord Jesus Christ, as we just demonstrated. No one could have perfumed his apostolate with more delicate charity than the Divine Savior. Yet He was unable to make himself liked by everyone; and humanly speaking—judging only the immediate appearances—his work failed, becoming so unpopular as to reach the extreme of the crucifixion. Barrabas was preferred to Him of Whom the Apostle was able to write "*pertransiit benefaciendo.*"<sup>6</sup> If popularity were the necessary consequence of every fruitful apostolate, and if conversely, unpopularity were the distinctive note of an unsuccessful one, Our Lord would have been the perfect prototype of an inept apostle.

In the Office of Tenebrae of Good Friday, the Church reads the following lesson of Saint Augustine about the energy with which our adorable Savior stigmatized the errors of the Jews, not recoiling in front of the immense hostility it caused, which He had certainly foreseen.

*He did not keep silent about their vices so as to inspire in them horror for those vices, rather than hatred of the physician who tended to them. But paying this solicitude with ingratitude, like frenzied men enraged by an ardent fever against the physician who came to heal them, they fashioned the design to kill him.*<sup>7</sup>

Hence we can see how unfounded and erroneous is the idea that popularity is a necessary reward of every successful apostolate.

---

<sup>5</sup> Gal. 6:14.

<sup>6</sup> "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

<sup>7</sup> Office of Tenebrae, Good Friday, II nocturn, fifth lesson.

If that were true, the apostolate would take on demagogic airs so as to never displease public opinion. In fact, never did Our Lord or the Apostles retreat for fear of becoming unpopular.

Meanwhile, not only did His Church triumph over all that unpopularity, but from the Apostles to this day She has been overcoming the torrent of calumnies, persecutions and blasphemies that are unceasingly raised against her. Just like her Divine Founder, Holy Mother Church—a true rock of contradiction—has stirred up an immense and terrible deluge of hatred; a deluge much smaller than the flood of love with which She has not ceased to fill the earth.

### **The Church neither Despises nor Rejects Popularity**

This does not mean that the Church, motivated by her motherly heart, does not strive to please her children or does not enjoy the loving tribute they pay her. Far from us the blasphemous idea that the Church should seek to be unpopular and disdainfully keep a distance from the masses. But that is a far cry from making popularity the exclusive fruit of the apostolate, a distance that common sense refuses to straddle. Let our rule be the beautiful Dominican motto: "*veritate charitati.*" Let us speak the truth with charity and make charity a means to attain the truth, but let us not use charity as an excuse for decreasing or deforming reality in any way, be it for gaining applause, avoiding criticism, or uselessly trying to please everyone. Otherwise, through charity we would attain error rather than truth.

### **Nor Does She Make It the End of Her Efforts**

And if perchance the wickedness of men sows with hatred the paths trod by our innocence, let us be consoled with the examples of the Saints. Benedict XV says about Saint Jerome,

*With his strong insistence on adhering to the integrity of the faith, it is not to be wondered at that he attacked vehemently those who left the Church; he promptly regarded them as his own personal enemies. "To put it briefly," he says, "I have never spared heretics, and have always striven to regard the Church's enemies as my own." [S. Jerome, Dial. contra Pelagianos, Prol. 2.] To Rufinus he writes: "There is one point in which I cannot agree with you: you ask me to spare heretics -- or, in other words -- not to prove myself a Catholic." [S. Jerome, Contra Ruf., 3, 43.] Yet at the same time Jerome deplored the lamentable state of*

heretics, and adjured them to return to their sorrowing Mother, the one source of salvation;[S. Jerome, *In Mich.*, I:10-IS] he prayed, too, with all earnestness for the conversion of those "who had quitted the Church and put away the Holy Spirit's teaching to follow their own notions." [S. Jerome, *In Is.*, 16:1-S]

We have seen with what reverent yet enthusiastic love he attached himself to the Roman Church and to the See of Peter, how eagerly he attacked those who assailed her. So when applauding Augustine, his junior yet his fellow-soldier, and rejoicing in the fact that they were one in their hatred of heresy, he hails him with the words: "Well done! You are famous throughout the world. Catholics revere you and point you out as the establisher of the old-time faith; and -- an even greater glory -- all heretics hate you. And they hate me too; unable to slay us with the sword, they would that wishes could kill." [S. Jerome, *Epist. ad Augustinum*, 141, 2; cf. *Epist. ad eundem*, 134,1.]

Sulpicius Severus quotes Postumianus to the same effect: "His unceasing conflict with wicked men brings on him their hatred. Heretics hate him, for he never ceases attacking them; clerics hate him, for he assails their criminal lives. But all good men admire him and love him. [Postumianus apud Sulp. Sev., *Dial.*, 1, 9.]"

And Jerome had to endure much from heretics and abandoned men, especially when the Pelagians laid waste the monastery at Bethlehem. Yet all this he bore with equanimity, like a man who would not hesitate to die for the faith.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

We have just seen the behavior of a Doctor of the Church and one of the greatest saints in her history, praised by a Pontiff. So there could be no greater guarantee that this behavior is not only licit but often required by the highest and noblest principles and interests of the Church.

Let us summarize our way of thinking by condensing it into some items that will make our thought more precise and show that neither sweetness nor energy should have an exclusive place in the apostolate:

1. Given the immense variety of souls and the multiple and complex situations in which they may find themselves, the same words and language should not be used indistinctly for all of them even if they were found in identical situations. Leo XIII said

---

<sup>8</sup> Benedict XV, Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, Sept. 15, 1920, nos. 38, 60, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Ben15/b15spiri.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Ben15/b15spiri.htm)

positively that an apostle can never use only one method of action. On the contrary, he affirmed that the methods of apostolate are many, and an apostle who does not know how to use them all is ineffective:

*Wherefore it is needful that the man who has to contend against all should be acquainted with the engines and the arts of all—that he should be at once archer and slinger, commandant and officer, general and private soldier, foot-soldier and horseman, skilled in sea-fight and in siege; for unless he knows every trick and turn of war, the devil is well able, if only a single door be left open, to get in his fierce bands and carry off the sheep."(De sacerdotio iv., 4.)<sup>9</sup>*

Moreover, Saint Paul warned that we should fight *"in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left."*<sup>10</sup>

This variety of strong and manly processes is very far indeed from the dull *"apostolic smile"* now being foisted as the only or almost only weapon of apostolate! How very different is this mutilated and saccharine apostolate from what Saint Paul describes:

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ.*<sup>11</sup>

2. For this reason, God raises in Holy Church saints endowed with different temperaments and guided by grace through different spiritual ways. This diversity—a legitimate expression of the fecundity of the Church—is providential. Seeking to reduce those varied manifestations to an essential uniformity is to work against the Holy Ghost and to attempt against the fecundity of Catholic Action.

3. This variety should be kept in mind when preparing the *"technique of apostolate,"* by not seeking to form apostles in only one mold but by teaching every one the true limits in which charity reigns so that Fortitude does not trespass them and harm Goodness. For its part Goodness must not transgress those limits lest it should become a dangerous and reprehensible weakness. Within these limits, it is well for everyone to act according to the holy liberty of the children of God, without being forced to mold his personality to that of others. In this sense, all should

<sup>9</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, Nov. 18, 1893, no. 17, [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_18111893\\_providentissimus-deus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus_en.html)

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. 6:7.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Cor. 10:4-5.

have a brotherly understanding and cooperate to serve the Church better within the variety of their temperaments and to carefully prevent that providential variety from giving rise to frictions that would ultimately prejudice Holy Church.<sup>12</sup>

### **Charity Cannot Obfuscate the Truth**

To confirm all we have seen, let us mention at last the advice of Pius XI in his masterly encyclical on Saint Francis de Sales:

*He, by his example, teaches them in no uncertain manner precisely how they should write. In the first place, and this the most important of all, each writer should endeavor in every way and as far as this may be possible to obtain a complete comprehension of the teachings of the Church. They should never compromise where the truth is involved, nor, because of fear of possibly offending an opponent, minimize or dissimulate it... When it is necessary to enter into controversy, they should be prepared to refute error and to overcome the wiles of the wicked.*<sup>13</sup>

Since the early times of the Church, this has been her language.<sup>14</sup> If a Catholic newspaper were to say about heretics, that they are "*as irrational beasts, naturally tending to the snare and to destruction*" the indignation in some of our circles would be immense. Saint Peter, however, said it.<sup>15</sup> If a Catholic newspaper were to write about socialists, liberals or Nazis,

*these are fountains without water, and clouds tossed with whirlwinds, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved. For, speaking proud words of vanity, they allure by the desires of*

---

<sup>12</sup> As is generally known, the Holy See tried, in the beginning of this century, to use all persuasive means to prevent the movement, *Le Sillon*, directed by Marc Sangnier, from falling into the crudest liberalism. One of the defects of this movement, even before going astray, consisted precisely in seeking to use only methods of so-called soft persuasion and starting a violent campaign against all Catholics endowed with a different personal outlook. Let us listen to the fatherly warning that the Holy Father St. Pius X addressed to pilgrims of *Le Sillon* discouraged at their inability to impose their methods on all French Catholics:

*"Do not let yourselves be downcast if all who profess the same Catholic principles are not always united to you, in the use of methods which aim to a common aim for all and that all wish to reach. The soldiers of a powerful army do not always use the same weapons and the same tactics; all should, however, be united in the same enterprise, keep a spirit of cordial fraternity and obey promptly the authority who directs them. May the charity of Christ reign among you and the other young Catholics of France. They are your brothers; they are not against you but with you. When your forces meet in the same field, support one another and never let a holy rivalry degenerate into an opposition inspired in human passions, or insufficiently elevated human viewpoints. It would be enough to have all the same Faith, the same feeling, and the same will, and victory will be granted to you."* (Allocation of September 11, 1904.)

<sup>13</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*, Jan. 26, 1923, no. 33, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11PERTU.HTM](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11PERTU.HTM)

<sup>14</sup> In this regard, see the magnificent work of Rev. Fr. Felix Sardá y Salvany, *Liberalism Is a Sin*, from which we extracted the majority of the following quotes.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Peter 2:12.

*fleshly riotousness, those who for a little while escape, such as converse in error: promising them liberty, whereas they themselves are the slaves of corruption. For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave. For if, flying from the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome: their latter state is become unto them worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them. For, that of the true proverb has happened to them: "The dog is returned to his vomit" and, "The sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."*<sup>16</sup>

If a Catholic newspaper, we repeat, were to write such things, what would happen to it?

We find identical expressions in the language of the saints. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, martyr of the second century wrote before his martyrdom several letters to various churches. In these we read the following expressions about heretics "ravens dogs, who bite secretly,"<sup>17</sup> "wolves,"<sup>18</sup> "beasts in the shape of men,"<sup>19</sup> "plants of the devil,"<sup>20</sup> "evil offshoots [of Satan], which produce death-bearing fruit...not the planting of the Father,"<sup>21</sup> "becoming defiled [in this way], shall go away into everlasting fire."<sup>22</sup>

Saint Polycarp was undoubtedly one of the dearest disciples of Saint John, the Apostle of Love. Saint Irenaeus learned from Saint Polycarp that once the Apostle went to the baths but left without washing himself, because he saw there Cerinthus, a heretic who denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He "rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, 'Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.'"<sup>23</sup> One can well imagine Cerinthus was not amused! One day, Saint Polycarp himself met Marcian, a docetist heretic; the latter asked him if he knew him, so he answered: "I do know thee, the first-born of Satan."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in this, they followed the advice of Saint Paul: "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid: Knowing that he, that is such an

---

<sup>16</sup> 2 Peter 2:17-22.

<sup>17</sup> Ephesians, 7 at [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Philadelphians, 2 at [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0108.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0108.htm)

<sup>19</sup> Smyraens, 4 at [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0109.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0109.htm)

<sup>20</sup> Ephesians, 10 at [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm)

<sup>21</sup> Trallians, 11, at [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0106.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0106.htm)

<sup>22</sup> Ephesians, 16 at [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm)

<sup>23</sup> St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, Bk III, ch. 3, no. 4, at [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm)

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

*one, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment.*"<sup>25</sup>

If Saint Polycarp himself happened to meet heretics, he would cover his ears, saying: *"God of mercy, why did You keep me on earth for me to have to endure such things?"* And would immediately flee to avoid such company.

In the fourth century, Saint Athanasius tells that Saint Anthony the Hermit, called the speeches of heretics a poison worse than that of serpents. Saint Thomas Aquinas, the placid and angelic Doctor, called William of the Holy Love and his followers who were heretics opposed to the Virginity of Our Lady: *"enemies of God, ministers of the devil, members of the anti-Christ, enemies of the salvation of mankind, detractors, reprobates, perverse, ignorant, equal to Pharaoh, worse than Jovinianus and Vigilantia."* Saint Bonaventure, Seraphic Doctor, called Gerald, his contemporary, *"perverse, slanderer, madman, poisoner, ignorant, liar, wicked, fool, perfidious."* Saint Bernard, the Mellifluous Doctor, said about Arnold of Brescia that he was

*disorderly, a vagabond, impostor, vessel of ignominy, scorpion thrown up from Brescia, looked at with horror in Rome, with abomination in Germany, despised by the Roman Pontiff, praised by the devil, worker of iniquities, devourer of the people, mouth full of curses, sower of discord, fabricator of schisms, ferocious wolf.*

Saint Gregory the Great said of John, Bishop of Constantinople that he had *"a worldly and abominable pride, the pride of Lucifer, prolific in stupid words, conceited and of small intelligence."* Likewise spoke Saints Fulgentius, Prosper, Pope Siricius, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzen, Basil, Hillary, Alexander of Alexandria, Cornelius and Cyprian, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement and all the Fathers of the Church, who distinguished themselves by their heroic virtues.

The most suave Bishop of Geneva, Saint Francis de Sales summarized in an admirable way the principle that inspired that behavior by so many saints: *"Of the enemies of God and His Church we must needs speak openly, since in charity we are bound to give the alarm whenever the wolf is found amongst the sheep."*<sup>26</sup> Obviously we do not recommend that only this language be used. But neither do we find it just to brand it as contrary to the charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>25</sup> Titus 3:10-11.

<sup>26</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books & Publishers, Inc., 1994), part 3, ch. 29, p. 208.

## **The Example of Bishop Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira**

In another chapter of this book we emphasized the similarities between concepts of members of certain confraternities of the time of Bishop Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira, in regard to the respect due to the Ecclesiastical Authority, with those of some theoreticians of Catholic Action. The similarity is also significant in regard to apostolate strategy. In one of his sermons to the people of Olinda, the remarkable Bishop Vital alerted:

*Nowadays there are all kinds of men who, denying the principle of authority...pretend to teach the bishops that they should be all sweetness and conciliation and never make use of a fatherly severity. Now, if we look at the first pages of the history of the Church, what do we see? Saint Paul, whose epistles breathe the sweetest charity of the Lord, tells the guilty Christians of Corinth: "I will go to you with a whip in my hand." And he issued against them the punishment of excommunication.<sup>27</sup>*

Brazil was able to overcome one of the most serious religious crises of its history thanks to the fact that the illustrious Bishop did not allow such one-sided ways of doing apostolate to become rooted in his spirit.

## **Let Us Adjust Our Methods to the Present-Day Mentality**

We should clarify that, if both the apostolic language impregnated with love and sweetness and the one that inspires fear and vibrates with holy energy are equally just and should be used at any given time, it is also certain in some epochs there is a greater need to place more emphasis on austerity and in others on sweetness. However, this worry should never be taken to the extreme of employing only one and abandoning the other—which would be a lack of balance.

In which case does our own time fall into? The ears of contemporary man are obviously full of exaggerated sweetness, accommodating sentimentality and the frivolous spirit of preceding generations. But the greatest mass movements of our time have not been set in motion through a mirage of easy ideals. On the contrary, it was in the name of the most radical principles, by appealing to the most absolute dedication and pointing to the rough and steep trails of heroism that the main political leaders have enthralled the masses to the point of delirium.

---

<sup>27</sup> Rev. Fr. Louis de Gonzague, O.M.C., *Monseigneur Vital (Antoine Gonçalves de Oliveira) Frere Mineur Capucin, Eveque d'Olinda: Une Page de L'Histoire du Brésil*, (Paris: Editions Saint-Remi, 1912) p. 328.



The greatness of our epoch resides precisely in this thirst for the absolute and for heroism. Why not quench this laudable craving by boldly preaching the absolute Truth and the supernaturally heroic morals of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

The spirit of the masses has changed and we must open our eyes to this reality. Let us not fall into the error of driving them away from us—which will inevitably happen if all they find in our ambiances is the diluted ideas of 19<sup>th</sup> century doctrinal homeopathy.

Shortly before his death, the illustrious Cardinal Baudrillart wrote an article showing that the piety of the faithful was increasingly venerating, in Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, the heroism of her death in expiatory holocaust to the Merciful Love, rather than only feeding their devotion by meditating on the sweetness, however admirable, of the Saint of Lisieux. And His Eminence concluded that it is by preaching heroism that the Church can today, more than in any other epoch, draw the masses back to Jesus Christ.

We should not forget this very serious warning. Let us give souls the strong bread they are asking for, rather than the rose water that no longer pleases them.

\* \* \*

It would not be superfluous to deal here with yet another subject. Some people claim a lay apostle must always and necessarily display a joyful look overflowing with happiness, lest he should put souls to flight.

In this sense, the most beautiful thought of Saint Francis de Sales —*"a sad saint is a sorry saint"*—has been very much abused.

As Saint Thomas Aquinas aptly teaches, and Saint Francis himself confirms, *"sorrow can be good or evil, depending on the effects it produces in us."*<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is fitting for the virtuous soul to experience good sorrow and even let it show on his face without fear of scaring anyone away from the Church. In fact, this is the edifying sorrow which Our Lord suffered when He said: *"My soul is sorrowful even unto death."*<sup>29</sup> And just as the most holy sorrow of Our Lord converted innumerable souls, if the same sorrow is seen on the face of a pious soul it can only attract and edify. It is about this sorrow that the Holy Ghost said: *"by the sadness of the*

---

<sup>28</sup> Saint Francis de Sales, *Pensamentos Consoladores* (1922), p. 178.

<sup>29</sup> Mark 14:34.

countenance the mind of the offender is corrected."<sup>30</sup> And more:  
*"The heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth."*<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, there is a holy joy that edifies and a worldly joy that scandalizes. It was about the latter that the Holy Ghost spoke when He said: *"For as the crackling of thorns burning under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool: now this also is vanity."*<sup>32</sup>

*Bonum ex integra causa:*<sup>33</sup> Hence, the edification of one's neighbor can come from holy sorrow as much as from holy joy in those who do apostolate. *Malum ex quocumque defectu:* only the opposite of edification can result from worldly joy and sorrow.

Therefore, it should not be understood that in order to do apostolate one must be always happy. What is really needed is that we remain always united with God whether our appearance is joyful or sad.

\* \* \*

The people who fall into these errors also profess a delirious enthusiasm for the virtue of simplicity. But how erroneously they understand it!

According to them, a Catholic should believe everything he is told and be as "innocent as a dove."

Now, the innocence of the dove, when unaccompanied by another virtue equally elevated, evangelical and noble—the cunning of the serpent—easily turns into folly.

About such "doves" the Holy Ghost says, they are "decoyed."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, *"The simpleton believes everything, but the shrewd man measures his steps."*<sup>35</sup>

Because of this a well-formed Christian *"when he [the enemy] shall speak low, trust him not: because there are seven mischiefs in his heart."*<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the prudent man is able *"an enemy is known by his lips, when in his heart he entertaineth deceit."*<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Eccles. 7:4.

<sup>31</sup> Eccles. 7:5.

<sup>32</sup> Eccles. 7:7.

<sup>33</sup> *Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocumque defectu:* An action is good when good in every respect; it is wrong when wrong in any respect.

<sup>34</sup> Osee 7:11.

<sup>35</sup> Prov. 14:15 (NAB).

<sup>36</sup> Prov. 26:25.

<sup>37</sup> Prov. 26:24

Thus, the well formed apostle knows how to place his perspicacity at the service of the Church, following the advice of Scripture: *"Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines: for our vineyard hath flourished."*<sup>38</sup>

According to a commentary by Father Matos Soares, this advice means: *"The foxes symbolize heretics, who are just as cunning. It is necessary to stop them right at the beginning, when they are still small (little foxes), otherwise later on they will be the desolation of the Church."*<sup>39</sup>

It is the same holy cunning that we should develop to *"be in peace with many, but let one of a thousand be thy counselor. If thou wouldst get a friend, try him before thou takest him, and do not credit him easily."*<sup>40</sup> The same book orders us: *"Separate thyself from thy enemies, and take heed of thy friends."*<sup>41</sup> And finding difficult the observance of this conduct is a proof of weakness: *"How very unpleasant is wisdom to the unlearned, and the unwise will not continue with her. She will be to them as a mighty stone of trial, and they will cast her from them before it be long."*<sup>42</sup> Filled with sentimentalism, they will not know how to practice the advice: *"According to thy power beware of thy neighbor,"*<sup>43</sup> or this other counsel: *"Tell not thy mind to friend or foe."*<sup>44</sup> For that reason, they are unaware that *"a man is known by his look."*<sup>45</sup> Nor do they know how to discern with sensible heart someone's deceitful words by his countenance, like one's taste discerns a dish of venison.

A most important observation should be made in this regard. We have already heard in certain circles—obviously those in which the effects of original sin have been forgotten, in practice if not in theory—that Catholic Action acts very wisely when it entrusts posts of responsibility and leadership to persons still unproven from the standpoint of doctrine or fidelity. This show of confidence encourages the neophyte and hastens his complete conversion of ideas and of life.

The trouble with this and many other errors that we refute here is the formulation of general rules based on possible but exceptional situations. Indeed, in some concrete cases it is

---

<sup>38</sup> Cant. 2:15.

<sup>39</sup> Fr. Mato Soares, *Bíblia Sagrada: Antigo Testamento (dos Salmos até o segundo livro dos Macabeus)* — Traduzido da Vulgata, (Porto, Portugal: Tipografia Porto Médico, 1934), p.

<sup>40</sup> Ecclus. 6:6-7.

<sup>41</sup> Ecclus. 6:13.

<sup>42</sup> Ecclus. 6:21-22.

<sup>43</sup> Ecclus. 9:21.

<sup>44</sup> Ecclus. 19:8.

<sup>45</sup> Ecclus. 19:26.

possible some people would draw great spiritual benefit from being treated thus. However, it is easy to see how the generalization of this rule would lead to abuse. A comparison will fully elucidate this matter. We know that one thief or another can be converted to a life of moderation if someone gives him a proof of trust that stimulates his self-respect and opens a path of regeneration that he saw as hopelessly lost. Should we deduce from that strictly possible but very rare event, that it would be a wise general rule of conduct to entrust thieves with keeping one's coffers? Now if we deem this rule dangerous when it comes to keeping our perishable treasures, why should we be less prudent when it concerns the custody of the imperishable treasures of the Church?

Obviously, this does not mean that a leader of Catholic Action should not, when possible, encourage beginners with affectionate words and—within the bounds of prudence—give them some proof of confidence, like a temporary duty. But there is a huge distance between that and a post, particularly one of responsibility. In principle, and except in extremely special and therefore very rare circumstances, that distance should not be bridged.

The same should be said of praising in public. A person in Catholic Action made a spirited remark to the effect that he has the impression that in the eyes of many people, the Church is like everyone's destitute sister who must content herself with leftovers and trifles while the best is saved for the secular use of mere temporal institutions. Precisely because of this, when a person of some importance approaches certain Catholic ambiances, the manifestations of pleasure are at times such and so many that even before undergoing the investigations and tests that prudence imposes, the neophyte is already canonized! At times, that "*rapprochement*" is pure illusion: a gesture, a word and even an insinuation are seen as proof of an authentic and lasting conversion that deserves immediate and ardent applause and a seal of total and unimpeachable Catholicity.



## Chapter 3

### The "Apostolate of Infiltration"

#### "Apostolate of Infiltration"

Another subject intimately related with the question of the "common ground" strategy is the so-called "*apostolate of infiltration*." Let us clarify this notion. As the term shows, "*apostolate of infiltration*" is a form of proselytism that consists in an apostle stealing into non-Catholic ambiances and working there to conquer souls. A vast number of concrete cases can fit into this theoretical definition. First of all, let us look at the nature of the ambience being infiltrated; second, what reasons are given for the infiltration; and, finally, who is the person assigned to carry out the infiltration. Only after this we will be able to say in which cases this apostolate is licit.

#### Variety of Ambiances

There are ambiances removed from the thought of the Church in which, nevertheless, evil or error are in a state of relative apathy. This would be the case with scientific, literary, recreational (i.e., a chess club), philatelic associations and so on. The temperament of people usually dedicated to such activities and the very nature of these activities make it highly unlikely they could serve for a militant and contagious action of evil. The same can be said of many work environments like banks, offices, departments etc. The huge amount of work, the all-absorbing attention demanded by business, and the bosses' morality can eventually create an environment that only marginally, if at all, drags people to evil. However, in this matter one must avoid any enumeration that does not have the character of an example.

Often enough, unfortunately, myriad circumstances can make one such place, typically innocuous in one city, highly harmful in another. Of themselves, however, these ambiances are not bad.

On the other hand, nowadays there are ambiances such that only a naïve person could imagine they are harmless. Such naiveté calls to mind the reproach of Prophet Osee to "*a dove that is decoyed*."<sup>1</sup> First on this list come all of the typically evil places of entertainment that public morality deems unfit for decent people. Second, the many places of entertainment, perhaps worse

---

<sup>1</sup> Osee, 7:11.

than the former, generally called "*quasi-family entertainment*." We see them as dens of ignominy. In these places, a housewife rubs shoulders, without blushing, with people whose category should not even be mentioned. Nor is the father, head of the family, ashamed to be there in sight of relatives and friends with company that destroys his prestige and gives his children a very bad example. Everything is mixed up; everything is leveled and confused in a promiscuity that diminishes both the distance and difference that should exist between a home and a brothel. As painful as it may be, let us say the truth: a family that frequents "*quasi-family*" places lowers itself to a condition of a quasi-family—in other words, a family in ruins. Unfortunately, the limits between family and quasi-family entertainment are becoming more and more blurry and many ambiances harbor under the label of family entertainment, a situation of complete promiscuity. Today, large hotels with dancing, casinos and halls are, for the most part and in the best of cases, quasi-family places.

Unfortunately, this panorama would not be complete if we failed to say that some ambiances frequented exclusively by families are in the same category. In them, leadership in terms of customs, good taste and elegance are so monopolized by persons of an openly scandalous life that evil seems to be surrounded by the splendor that the unlimited resources of money and politeness can place at its service. How many so-called family dances, gatherings and dinners are but ambiances in which everything comes together to lose souls! We do not hesitate to say, without fear of exaggeration, that in certain circles the social life as a whole has been invaded, infected and dominated by this despotism of evil, unquestionably exercised even in the excess of language and intemperance in drinking! The same can be said of certain work ambiances in which excessive familiarity, immoral conversation and pagan behavior, all of it made worse by sexual promiscuity, turn working for a living into a serious risk to one's eternal salvation.

Having thus described various ambiances in which a person can find himself, we can establish the first principles for any solution.

## **Plurality of Attitudes**

1. According to the masterly doctrine developed by Abbot Chautard in *The Soul of the Apostolate*, the first concern of anyone who consecrates himself to work in the apostolate must be above all his own sanctification. Now, for the majority of people in our time it is of primordial importance that they frequent Catholic ambiances, that is, that they spend part of their leisure

time with their brothers in the Faith, at a center of Catholic Action or any other religious association. And since they are young men, this need is imperative. As we have called to mind, this is the process used by the admirable propaganda machine of totalitarian countries. Thus, whenever the "*apostolate of infiltration*" even in harmless environments means a considerable sacrifice of this irreplaceable tool of formation, it should be understood that the said "*apostolate of infiltration*" should not be put into practice.

II. Fortunately, this is not always the case. Sometimes a lay apostle is able to frequent ambiances he is supposed to infiltrate without losing the vital contact he needs to keep with his association. In this case, the "*apostolate of infiltration*" in harmless ambiances can attain priceless results.

III. The Divine Master asks what does it profit for a man to win the whole world if he loses his own soul. Hence the principle, also approved by any moralist worthy of this name, that in the case "*where there is a grave and proximate danger of formal sin, particularly against faith and the angelic virtue, God absolutely wills that a man give up works of charity.*"<sup>2</sup> In other words, except for the most special case of a duty of state, it would be a mortal sin to expose oneself to a near occasion of mortal sin even if doing so could make a brilliant and promising work of apostolate succeed. There can be no doubt in this regard.

Since for emotionally normal men to frequent clearly non-family and quasi-family ambiances of any kind is a near occasion of sin, it is strictly forbidden for members of Catholic Action to frequent such places.

IV. It is a most grave error to pretend that Catholic Action, by some mysterious grace of state, immunizes its members against temptation. While this grace of state is certainly much more abundant for the clergy, it does not alter the relationship between grace and free will, nor does it smother concupiscence and the devil, which exist for all men. It will not do it for Catholic Action either. To demonstrate this it would suffice to repeat the arguments we developed earlier.<sup>3</sup> These doctrines are erroneous because they presuppose a false panorama.

It is no less erroneous to argue with the example of certain saints of the early centuries of the Church, who are said to have frequented such places to do apostolate. Without discussing the historical fact, we cannot fail to emphasize that if the argument

---

<sup>2</sup> Chautard, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Part III, chap. 3, "Apostolate of Conquest."



were valid, Canon Law would have erred by forbidding clergy and religious to frequent such ambiances.

V. Someone could argue that placing such a restriction on the freedom of movement of Catholic Action would stymie its fecundity. But Catholic Action is not a game of lottery or roulette in which some souls are exposed so as to gain others. On the other hand, the spectacle of pure and generous youth, triumphing over the seductions of the modern world and trampling all its enchanting attractions underfoot to leave the modern pestilence behind, must necessarily cause a much greater impression on souls with good judgment and balance, upright souls thirsty for virtue: in a word, souls on their way to Jesus. When apostles "*camouflaged*" as pagans partake in entertainment entirely dissonant with their Faith and indulge in such pleasures, in the end one does not know whether the apostolate is done as an excuse for pleasure, or if pleasure is supposed to be an instrument of apostolate. Positively, it is not by putting on a worldly look that one attracts souls to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. Applying this principle to quasi-family dances, work places dangerous for morality, etc., we reach the conclusion that these ambiances are in themselves a near occasion of sin for persons with a normal sensibility, and should therefore be proscribed.

Arguments in the opposite sense were, or at least could be, presented with a famous text by Leo XIII on the infiltration of Catholics in Roman society. In this text the Holy Father describes the penetration by early Christians into most varied job positions, including the Imperial Curia. Note that this infiltration happened in obligatory workplaces: the Holy Father does not mention faithful Catholics infiltrating orgies of Roman high society.

VII. Finally, as we said, there are places where it is licit to be present because they pose no danger to salvation. This does not mean that Catholic Action has a right to impose on those of its members who gave up all entertainment, even licit, to lead a more saintly life, that they frequent such places. Such members are worthy of great praise and any criticism of them would be a serious inversion of values.

The first reason for this is that Christian perfection, when practiced clearly and without dissimulation is always the most genuine and fruitful form of apostolate.

Secondly, it is certain that the obligation to save souls cannot deprive anyone whatsoever of the most sacred freedom to practice the kind of renunciation that a prudent director deems guided by the Holy Ghost. If on the natural level that life might

seem less fruitful, on the supernatural one it will have an efficacy so great it would be difficult to gauge.

VIII. When weighing all these multiple factors, one must not forget that the only criteria to take into account is not that of the greater or lesser risk posed by the place in which one is, but also the law of decency and the duty of good example. Ecclesiastical authorities censure attendance at questionable places, pagan entertainment, etc. Certain classes of the population, more docile to the voice of the Church or more attached to their traditions, are still reluctant to go along with the new customs. They thus expose themselves to the mockery of their acquaintances but also sacrifice by giving up some entertainment. How would those circles react at the news that members of Catholic Action are not only allowed but even should frequent such places and enjoy all entertainment, indulging in everything the hierarchy condemns? The very hierarchy many of them brag about participating in and being mandataries of! And yet these self-proclaimed mandataries act against the intentions of the mandator! So, even if a member of Catholic Action could claim that frequenting certain places does not harm him personally, his own dignity as member of Catholic Action would forbid him to do so.

IX. This does not mean that we do not admit the possibility that one or another member of Catholic Action, in very special and therefore very exceptional cases, previously authorized by his respective assistant and having taken all precautions to avoid any bad example, can carry out some "infiltration" by attending, for example, a meeting of a Communist union or the like. However, if this exceptional event becomes normal, it will spell the ruin of Catholic Action.

X. Let everyone be mindful, above all, that in this matter no one can be his own judge. Hence, he should always seek the advice of a prudent priest. At times even the best formed souls go through long temptations of natural or diabolical origin. These are such as to make dangerous that which for others is normally innocuous. Thus, the good of the apostolate must always be subordinated to the good of one's interior life, as weighed by prudent priests.

XI. All these reasons would be incomplete if we failed to emphasize that someone may be forced, as a duty of his state, to work in clearly dangerous places or, more rarely, to be present in worldly places. Let us always remember that God gives special strength to those who involuntarily find themselves in this situation. As long as this is happening, the people involved should take advantage of this unexpected situation to do

apostolate of infiltration. However, no duty of state could ever oblige anyone to do evil. Let each one consult a wise and prudent priest before judging himself authorized to accept such an exceptional situation. But if the adviser finds that a duty of state really exists, let those souls be at peace and fight courageously to sanctify themselves and those in contact with them. God will give them the strength that would most certainly be lacking in would-be infiltrators driven by hasty zeal rather than a real duty of state.

### **How to Do "*Apostolate of Infiltration*"**

We could not close this subject without establishing the behavior that members of Catholic Action should follow in the "*apostolate of infiltration*." Here also, in order to clarify this complex matter as much as possible, it is well to proceed by making a definite enumeration of principles.

I. Many times, the apostolate of infiltration is aimed primarily at exerting a direct action on the people whose group was infiltrated. This is the case, for example, with persons who infiltrate a Communist cell with the purpose of obtaining information, campaign plans, etc. Obviously, such information means much more than the doubtful conquest of some of the Communist leaders there. In this case a Catholic should hide his convictions if he wants to obtain results; and it would be licit to do so as long as he does not reach the extreme of denying the truth, instead of only hiding it.

II. Except for this and other special cases, the member of Catholic Action should not forget that the greatest ornament of the Catholic Church is Our Lord Jesus Christ. So, to refrain from confessing Our Lord publicly and clearly; to veil His Divine Face on the pretext of doing apostolate; to avoid proclaiming that we are Catholic Christians, proud of it and proud of practicing the virtues imposed by the Church, would be to deprive the apostolate of its most effective means of attraction. It would mean renouncing the spreading of the "*good odor of Christ*,"<sup>4</sup> after which generous souls from all geographical and ideological latitudes will always run.

Clearly, therefore, the famous "*common ground*" tactic cannot be used in the "*apostolate of infiltration*" in a habitual and methodical way. On the contrary, all we said about this delicate matter in another chapter perfectly applies here.

---

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. 2:15.

Deplorable naturalism! Instead of understanding that the success of the apostolate is for the apostle to manifest Jesus Christ, they suppose that it consists in hiding Him. And he who hides or disfigures His doctrine by so-called mitigation, hides Our Lord Jesus Christ.

How different was the attitude of the holy Curé of Ars, named by the Church as the patron saint of parish priests! He developed methods of apostolate that should profoundly influence the orientation of Catholic Action. While his severity might seem excessive to modernists—he even refused absolution for a long time to a peasant woman because she went to a family dance once a year—he attracted souls more than anyone else. Of him, Abbot Chautard could say: "*Joannes quidem signum fecit nullum.*"<sup>5</sup> Without working miracles Saint John the Baptist attracted multitudes. The voice of Saint John Vianney was quite weak to be heard by the multitudes who gathered around him. But if they could not hear him, they could see him, and they would see a monstrosity of God. The sight alone captivated and converted those present.

A lawyer was just back from Ars. Asked about what had impressed him the most, he answered: "*I have seen God in a man.*"<sup>6</sup> We cannot understand how a doctrine of life, coming from lips that know how to enunciate it in an entirely supernatural way, can remain sterile with upright souls. In his sermons the holy Curé of Ars did just that. The solution for a fruitless apostle is not to eliminate the truth from one's lips but to learn, at the feet of the Tabernacle and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the secret of proclaiming it not only with one's lips but with one's whole soul.

III. Of course, persons obliged to live or work in openly hostile ambiances are not obliged to behave likewise as long as they have well-founded reasons to fear being fired or sustain financial loss. The obligation of doing an open and bold apostolate is not applicable to them, except if they are asked to expressly deny the truth.

### **What to Think of Dances?**

We would not consider our task finished without an observation about dances. It is totally obvious and even commonplace that dancing is not an evil in itself. However, concrete circumstances that can arise, make dancing in general a rather serious evil.

---

<sup>5</sup> "John performed no sign" (John 10:41).

<sup>6</sup> Msgr. H. Convert, *Le Saint Curé d'Ars et le Sacrement de Pénitence*, (Lyon, Paris: ed. Emmanuel Vitte, 1931), p. 122.

The sweetness of Saint Francis de Sales is very often mentioned—and rightfully so. The advice that the holy Doctor gives about dances is conclusive, and shows how dangerous he found the dances of his time:

*I would say to you of balls what physicians say of mushrooms—the best are but unwholesome food...If you cannot well avoid mixing in such pursuits, go in a careful watchful spirit... [Dance] but little and seldom...and beware that you do not become over-fond of the amusement...Such idle recreations [like dancing] are generally dangerous, inasmuch as they dissipate the spirit of devotion, weaken our energies, cool our charity, and arouse many evil inclinations in the heart; therefore they should be entered upon with great caution.<sup>7</sup>*

How should one dance? Saint Francis de Sales explains it: "*with modesty, dignity, and pure intentions.*"<sup>8</sup> What would the Holy Doctor say about some modern dances, like the "*conga*," in which the couples make long lines through the hall holding one another, gesturing and yelling like children? Would he find a way to dance the *conga* with modesty and dignity when that seemed already a problem in regard to the soft, artistic and delicate dances of his time?

Of course not. Many people understand that because Saint Francis de Sales, though with great apprehension and unease, authorized in thesis that people go dance, this authorization should be liberally extended to everyone. Would these persons be careful enough to advise those who dance to have wholesome thoughts during the dance? And would they have the courage of recommending the thoughts Saint Francis de Sales mentions? What are they?

*Whilst you were at the ball, there were souls in torment owing to sins committed or instigated under similar circumstances. (2) And at the same time holy and pious men were serving God, singing His praise and contemplating His beauty. How much better was their time spent than yours? (3) Whilst you were dancing, some souls departed this life in bitter anguish, and thousands of men and women were wandering in the streets or lying on their beds of suffering... (4) Our Blessed Lord, His Mother, the Saints and Angels, were watching you, and surely they pitied and lamented over you, seeing your heart occupied and pleased with such unsatisfying trifles. (5) Whilst you are thus engaged, time slips on and death draws nigh. He mocks you, and calls you to join his dance, in which the music is the groaning for past sin, and in which you will make but one step from life to death: this is the true pastime of men, since in it they pass in an instant from time to eternity, either of good or ill.<sup>9</sup>*

---

<sup>7</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

It is interesting to read in this line the third part of Chapter 33 of the never sufficiently praised *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

The remarkable Dominican Father Vuillermet, in an interesting monograph about *Catholics and the New Dances*, from which we take almost all of our quotes about dances, made an important observation valid for any type of dancing:

*Frequent and regular dances rarely remain a simple entertainment. On the contrary, as nearly all moralists observe, they become an occasion for meeting and intimacy by people who thus find an easy and seemingly innocuous way to give their passions a food for which they are always hungry. And even when this initial desire does not exist, is it not true that the frequency of these meetings brings about the birth of passion, all the more so because these meetings are long and thus more dangerous? Nowadays people dance with the same partner throughout the party, something that would have been seen before as a gravely improper behavior. And after the initial ceremony wears off and familiarity starts to set in between the young man and his partner, is it not true that modesty begins to weaken? Feelings are no longer examined and, without realizing it, thoughts and desires that would have once caused a rebellion of the conscience begin to take hold in one's intellect and heart. I consider, therefore that these frequent dances with the same person are extremely dangerous.*<sup>10</sup>

After making some more lenient considerations about small, absolutely sporadic and improvised dancing get-togethers in the intimacy of a family, which nevertheless "are still ill-advised in many ways due to their nature," the author concludes:

*in theory, dancing is not immoral . . . and can only become so accidentally. But I cannot deny that in practice, the accidental is the most frequent. People who sin because of dancing are **incomparably more numerous** than those who do not. The reason lies partly in the decrease of Faith, the abandonment of pious exercises and on the other hand loosening of customs, which today allows such undue familiarities in the dance that very seldom does virtue not fail during it.*<sup>11</sup>

These words are of 1924. What would the author say of the dances of 1942?

In 1924, Europe suffered from the invasion of certain American dances—which seem so moderate today—and were the object of many condemnations by the hierarchy in France. Cardinal Dubois, the archbishop of Chambéry, and the bishop of Lille condemned the new

---

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Vuillermet, O.P., *Os Católicos e as Novas Danças*, p.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.

dances in succession. The Archbishop of Cambrai wrote: "the tango, the fox-trot and other similar dances are immoral entertainment in themselves. They are forbidden by the conscience itself everywhere and always, before the bishops' condemnations and independently of them." And Benedict XV, in the Encyclical *Sacra Prope Diem*, says: "Those exotic and barbarous dances recently imported into fashionable circles, one more shocking than the other; one cannot imagine anything more suitable for banishing all the remains of modesty."<sup>12</sup>

Many of these dances came from the lowest classes of the aboriginal peoples of the Western Hemisphere. In his pastoral letter, Bishop Charot says about them:

*Soften as much as you wish this barbaric graft, correct its native lack of modesty as well as you can: as soon as it finds a favorable temperament, this scion will recover its fire and its natural violence. It is the virus of pagan flesh penetrating a social organism shaped by seventeen centuries of Christian spirituality and moral dignity. It is more than revolt (of which no Christian century was spared): deep down, by tendency, it is the anarchy of instinct.*<sup>13</sup>

What could it be said of modern dances, many of which are obviously imported and adapted from the "bas-fonds" of old pagan dances of American blacks?

As for children's dances, why not reproduce here, confirming what our bishops so eloquently said, the words of Louis Veuillot:

*These dances for children are a dazzling show, they say. Yes, they are, for the eyes.*

*But what a sad scene it is when we listen to the whispering of reason. Eight-year old girls learn about vanity and ostentation; they are already apt in the art of smiling, posing, adopting different attitudes or musical inflexions in the voice. The boys assume different appearances and expressions, on tips from their mothers and put on gentlemanly, pensive or self-important looks; some pretend they are lively or melancholic, depending on what suits them better. Their mothers are there, beaming. But the scene is ugly. One can see that the characters of that miniature dance had been desecrated from their cradle in the flower of their gracious and naïve simplicity. A reasonable person who attended one of these so-called innocent parties said one experiences a strong desire to whip the kids left and right.*<sup>14</sup>

To close, let us see what the Curé of Ars, elevated by Holy Mother Church as model for modern pastors, did in this regard.

---

<sup>12</sup> Benedict XV, Encyclical *Sacra Propediem*, Jan. 6, 1921, no. 19, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Ben15/b15sapro.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Ben15/b15sapro.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Most Rev. Charost,

<sup>14</sup> Louis Veuillot, *L'Univers*, Dec. 28, 1858.

We have taken the quotations below from the magnificent work by Msgr. H. Convert:

Both the general interest of the fold entrusted to the care of Fr. Vianney, as well as that of certain people more particularly exposed to losing their souls, demanded the suppression of such a pernicious disorder (dances). He reflected on this, and has, ever since, decided to apply to the letter the principles of Moral Theology on occasional and relapsing sinners, with a great kindness but also with an adamant energy that nothing could turn back. Indeed, he denied absolution, even at Easter, to everyone who had danced, even if only once, during the year; and he would keep them away from the sacraments for as long as he 'deemed it likely that they would fall again into their sin.' They could come to confession and, in fact, most of them continued to come; he encouraged them, exhorted them to change their lives, but he would not absolve them. "If you do not amend your lives, you are condemned!" he would say.

As you can imagine, this behavior gave rise to many complaints. People would openly comment in every which way that the parish priest was not 'convenient.' His method was compared with that of his more indulgent colleagues: he was called scrupulous, **ingrate** (in the local idiom, ingrate means obnoxious and unpleasant). Some people went to confession in the neighboring parishes; he replied they had gone "to fetch a passport to hell." Speaking among themselves these people accused him saying: "He wants to make us promise things we cannot fulfill; he would like us to be saints and this is not quite possible in the world. He would like us never to set foot in dancing parties and never to frequent nightclubs and games. If all this were necessary we would never fulfill our Easter duties..." However, "one cannot say that we will never go back to such entertainment, as we do not know what occasions will arise." To this selfish argumentation, he replied: "The confessor, fooled by your crafty language, gives you absolution and tells you: 'Behave!' For my part I tell you that you trampled upon the adorable blood of Jesus Christ and sold out your God like Judas sold Him to his executioners."

What did the Curé of Ars gain with such a method? Many young men and women were excluded from the sacraments for years. It is true. Could we think, could we say that this was an evil? Had his method been different, they would have received the sacraments without validity or sacrilegiously: they would have joined, as happens only too often, the practices of Christian life with disorders of the heart; the parish would appear to have been converted without being so in reality; the poms of Satan would always have prestige; and the Prince of darkness would have remained the true master of the situation. But the Curé of Ars wanted Jesus Christ to be the indisputable King of his fold. So he went on war footing for Jesus Christ for more than twenty years, gaining ground from the enemy inch by inch, sacrificing



*his rest in this battle and temporarily also his reputation, shedding his blood abundantly nearly every day, becoming exhausted from fasting and fatigue. Finally, victory was complete and definitive; piety and virtue were able to flourish freely on this land purified and conquered for its only Master, and to this day we continue to savor its fruits.*

*Besides, let us say in passing that the Curé of Ars showed firmness not only in regard to dances. "The sinner who would not heed his tender admonitions--his assistant testified--found him inflexible in keeping the rules" and "was faced with an insurmountable barrier."<sup>15</sup>*

The same author adds in a note:

*Dances were soon abolished in the parish, though some tried to bring them back every once in a while. They are no longer mentioned from 1832 onward. But young men and women wanted to amuse themselves by going to dance in the neighboring places. It was then, above all that the Saint armed himself with intransigent firmness.<sup>16</sup>*

---

<sup>15</sup> Convert, pp. 18-21.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. fn.



## Chapter 4

### Neutral Associations

In close connection with the preceding subject is the problem of inter-denominational or neutral associations.

#### The Terms of the Problem

As everyone knows, certain class associations like unions, beneficent associations, etc. can assume two different aspects. They can show themselves clearly Catholic or dilute their Catholic nature behind some merely temporal title. Which of the two attitudes should we prefer?

At least at first sight, the solution to the problem may seem complex. Each of these attitudes presents its own advantages and drawbacks.

On the one hand, works of a clear and official Catholic nature can develop a more declared, positive and thereby effective action. On the other hand, works with an entirely lay appearance at times draw more generous resources from authorities and private donors and are able to attain a greater scope, preventing the Catholic name from turning away people with anti-clerical prejudice and so on. Furthermore, their bylaws would not require being Catholic as a condition for membership. How to solve this problem? Which kind of organization should we prefer?

As can be seen, we are still faced here with the problem of the "*common ground*" tactic and the "*apostolate of infiltration*." We know people who take their liberalism in this matter to the extreme of preferring that Catholic unions not be founded so that Catholics can infiltrate Communist unions to try and convert their members.

#### The Solution

In light of the principles we exposed, the solution should be as follows:

1. It will always be better to found clearly Catholic works. Even if some serious losses should be sustained, the spiritual advantages would largely compensate those drawbacks. In

this sense, the Holy Father Pius X wrote an outstanding letter to Count Medolago Albani.<sup>1</sup>

2. If it becomes absolutely impossible to found clearly denominational works due to some express legal device or to an almost complete lack of Catholic population in certain areas, social works without an official Catholic title may be founded with fruit.

3. In any case, all else being equal, to prefer neutral associations to officially Catholic ones is a telltale sign of a liberal and naturalistic mentality.

Indeed, this preference comes almost always from an immoderate zeal to solve mainly social problems of an economic nature and from a thirst for immediate and tangible achievements such as building large orphanages, asylums, hospitals and so on. The confessional character of the movement is sacrificed to these goals in the hope of obtaining greater financial support from certain circles. But the increase in temporal advantages results in the forfeiture of important spiritual ones. Confessional associations better favor the perseverance of the good and allow a more open and effective apostolate with sinners, heretics or infidels. Thus, as Pius XI said, material and transitory evils are remedied while spiritual and eternal evils—the most serious ones—are neglected.

*No one can be thought so poor and naked, no one so infirm or hungry, as he who is deprived of the knowledge and grace of God, so there is no one who cannot understand that both the mercy and the rewards of God shall be given to him who, on his part, shows mercy to the neediest of his fellow-beings.*<sup>2</sup>

We will mention a few more papal texts apt to enforce our opinion and thus complete the highly conclusive documentation already quoted.

Leo XIII said:

*That is the reason why We have incessantly exhorted Catholics to enter these associations for bettering the condition of the laboring classes, and to organize other undertakings with the same object in view; but We have likewise warned them that all this should be done under the auspices of religion, with its help and under its guidance.*<sup>3</sup>

Do not think, however, that "help" and "guidance" have only a symbolic meaning. In Catholic unions, for example, more than just

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Part IV, chap. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Feb. 28, 1926, no. 14, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11REREC.HTM](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11REREC.HTM)

<sup>3</sup> Leo XIII, *Graves de Communi*, no. 12.

economic matters should be taken care of. The Sacred Congregation of the Council recommends they should "effectively provide for a Christian education of all union members" and furthermore "they should organize week-long spiritual exercises with the purpose of imbuing union activity with the Christian spirit of charity, moderation and justice."<sup>4</sup>

Why spiritual exercises in labor unions? The answer is clear.

*Those who preside over institutions whose aim is to promote worker welfare should remember that nothing is more adequate than Religion to guarantee the general welfare, concord and harmony among all classes, and that Christian charity is the best link among them. Those who intend to improve a worker's wellbeing by helping him only to conquer the ephemeral and fragile goods of this world and neglect to nudge souls toward moderation through the affirmation of their Christian duties, would be doing a very poor job on behalf of worker welfare.*<sup>5</sup>

*Unless forced by necessity to do otherwise, Catholics ought to prefer to associate with Catholics, a course which will be very conducive to the safeguarding of their faith.*<sup>6</sup>

These guidelines are so current that the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a letter addressed to Most Rev. Achille Liénart, Bishop of Lille, France, on June 5, 1929, wrote:

*The Sacred Congregation of the Council cannot help but notice that although the leaders of the association are professed Catholics, they in fact established their association as neutral. In this regard, it is well to remind them of what Leo XIII wrote: "Catholics ought to prefer to associate with Catholics, unless forced by necessity to do otherwise. This is a very important point for the safeguard of the Faith." If it is not possible to form confessional employer's unions at the moment, the Sacred Congregation nevertheless deems it necessary to warn Catholic industrialists of their personal responsibility in the resolutions taken so they conform with Catholic morals and that the workers' religious and moral interests are guaranteed or at least unharmed. Let them take special care to show Christian unions due regard by giving them a better, or at least equal treatment to that given openly a-religious and revolutionary organizations.*

The Holy Father Pius X also developed the same doctrine:

*Now, concerning workingmen's associations, even though their purpose is to obtain earthly advantages for their members,*

<sup>4</sup> Letter of the Congregation of the Council to Most Rev. Liénart, Bishop of Lille, France, June 5, 1929.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XV, Letter to the Bishop of Bergamo, Mar. 11, 1920.

<sup>6</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Longinqua*, Jan. 6, 1895, no. 17, at

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_06011895\\_longinqua\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_06011895_longinqua_en.html)

nonetheless those associations are to be most approved and considered as most useful for the genuine and permanent advantage of their members which are established chiefly on the foundation of the Catholic religion and openly follow the directives of the Church. We have repeated this declaration on several previous occasions in answer to question from various countries. Consequently, such so-called confessional Catholic associations must certainly be established and promoted in every way in Catholic regions as well as in all other districts where it can be presumed that they can sufficiently assist the various needs of their members. However, when there is a question about associations which directly or indirectly touch upon the sphere of religion and morality, it would not be permitted to foster and spread mixed organizations, that is, associations composed of Catholics and non-Catholics, in the areas just mentioned. Over and above other matters, in such organizations there are or certainly can be for our people serious dangers to the integrity of their faith and the due obedience to the commandments and precepts of the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup>

There are cases in which collaboration between Catholics and non-Catholics is advisable: "*For such a purpose, however, We would rather see Catholic and non-Catholic associations unite their forces through that new and timely institution known as the cartel.*"<sup>8</sup>

The Holy See demands that utmost precaution be taken in such collaboration. Its instructions in this sense are definitive. The abovementioned letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Council to Bishop Liénart reads:

*For such understandings to be licit, four conditions are necessary: that they take place only in certain specific cases; that the cause they seek to defend is just; that the agreement be temporary; that all precautions be taken to avoid the dangers that can arise from such rapprochement.*

This does not mean that in certain circumstances and "*as long as such toleration does not cease to be appropriate or permissible by reason of new and changed conditions,*"<sup>9</sup> mixed professional associations cannot be tolerated; "*necessary precautions, however, must be adopted in order to avoid the dangers which, as has already been mentioned, follow upon such associations.*"<sup>10</sup>

What actually are the mixed associations that the Catholics can join?

---

<sup>7</sup> St. Pius X, Encyclical *Singulari Quadam*, Sept. 24, 1912, no. 4, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10lab.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10lab.htm)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

*These associations must avoid everything that is not in accord, either in principle or practice, with the teachings and commandments of the Church or the proper ecclesiastical authorities. Similarly, everything is to be avoided in their literature or public utterances or actions which in the above view would incur censure.*

*The Bishops, therefore, should consider it their sacred duty to observe carefully the conduct of all these associations and to watch diligently that the Catholic members do not suffer any harm as a result of their participation.<sup>11</sup>*

While mixed associations can be tolerated as long as circumstances demand it, and Catholic ones are highly approved, the final word of the Church in this matter is:

*On the one hand, no one could accuse of bad faith and, under such a pretext, bear ill will toward those who, while firmly defending the teachings and rights of the Church, nonetheless for good reasons have joined or wish to join mixed labor associations in those places where, under certain safeguards, ecclesiastical authority has permitted them in view of local conditions. On the other hand, it would likewise be most reprehensible to oppose or attack the purely Catholic associations (this type of association must, on the contrary, be supported and promoted in every possible manner), and to demand that the so-called intercredal associations be introduced and force their establishment on the grounds that all Catholic associations in every diocese ought to be set up along one and the same pattern.<sup>12</sup>*

Summing up these principles and reaffirming them, the same Pontiff declared:

*Say clearly that the mixed associations and the alliances with non-Catholics are permitted under certain circumstances, but that the predilections of the Pope are directed toward the unions of Catholics, who banning all human respect and closing their eyes to flattery or threats in the opposite sense, gather around the standard which, however combated as it may be, is the most beautiful of all, because it is the standard of the Church.<sup>13</sup>*

It will never be enough to insist that the Church only tolerates neutral associations. Reinforcing everything he wrote, Pius X defined neutral associations as being only "*not unlawful under precise conditions and guarantees, in specific countries and only because of particular circumstances.*"<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., no. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., no. 8.

<sup>13</sup> St. Pius X, Allocution of May 27, 1914.

<sup>14</sup> St. Pius X, Letter to Msgr. Piffl of the Popular Catholic Union of Vienna.

There lies the clear doctrine many times defined by the Holy See. Obviously, it implies the faculty of evaluating concrete circumstances, which inevitably gives many people an occasion to think they are entitled to claim that such circumstances are frequent among us.

For serene and impartial minds, the case is altogether different. *"Roma locuta, causa finita est."*<sup>15</sup> And the words of the Apostle never lose their value: *"A man that is a heretic...avoid: Knowing that he, that is such an one, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment."*<sup>16</sup> This is the feeling that should dominate every true Catholic in this matter. How different is the obsessive desire to collaborate with the wicked often noticed in certain circles! Those who want to combine their efforts with those of infidels and under **only one authority** do so not because of exceptional situations but led by a wish, sometimes subconscious, to erase the dividing line between good and evil. They forget what the Apostle said:

*Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement had the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God, as God saith: "I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, go out from among them, and be ye separate," saith the Lord, "and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you; and you shall be my sons and daughters," saith the Lord almighty.*<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> "Rome has spoken, the case is ended."

<sup>16</sup> Tit. 3:10-11.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Cor. 6:14-18.



## Chapter 5

### The “Workshops”

#### The Doctrine We Refute

In the Encyclical in which he condemned the Catholic youth association called *Le Sillon*, the Holy Father Pius X, after exposing the egalitarian and liberal nature of the group's doctrines, showed the repercussions of that tendency in the various spheres of its activity. When he dealt with the methods of intellectual formation *Le Sillon* employed to train its members, Pius X showed how their leveling drive was inspired in the doctrine of universal suffrage:

*Indeed, the Sillon has no hierarchy. The governing elite has emerged from the rank and file by selection, that is, by imposing itself through its moral authority and its virtues. People join it freely, and freely they may leave it. Studies are carried out without a master, at the very most, with an adviser. The study groups are really intellectual pools in which each member is at once both master and student. The most complete fellowship prevails amongst its members, and draws their souls into close communion: hence the common soul of the Sillon. It has been called a "friendship". Even the priest, on entering, lowers the eminent dignity of his priesthood and, by a strange reversal of roles, becomes a student, placing himself on a level with his young friends, and is no more than a comrade.<sup>1</sup>*

Reading this text attentively, we can see that the Holy Father condemns in that teaching method, the following errors:

1. The abolition of the function of professor—seen as being unegalitarian.
2. As a result, teaching loses its traditional character, becoming a search for truths whose results are approved not by the professor with his authority and prestige but in a democratic fashion, by the vote and consensus of self-teaching students. In other words, it is a radical pedagogic anarchy.

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Pius X, Apostolic Letter *Notre Charge Apostolique*, Aug. 25, 1910. (Trans.: See Appendix II for the full text of this Apostolic Letter. French original at <http://membres.lycos.fr/lesbonstextes/stpxnotrechargeapostolique.htm>; English versions at *The American Catholic Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1910, vol. XXXV, no. 140, pp. 693-711; [www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc\\_view.cfm?recnum=5456](http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=5456); [www.the-pope.com/sillon.html](http://www.the-pope.com/sillon.html); TFP referred to the French original in editing the various English versions.)

In this matter, we should distinguish two errors: The spirit of independence, which suggested that subversion of methods, and the radical inadequacy of those methods for a solid and vigorous intellectual formation.

The deepest cause of the errors we have been analyzing is a strong substratum of liberalism, easily noticed through all we have said. Consciously or not, those errors always result in a decrease of authority. The elements dominated by such a mentality could do nothing but fall, more or less completely, in the error of *Le Sillon*. This is why we have very often heard the statement that classes, courses, etc., are obsolete methods of moral and intellectual formation, which Catholic Action should neither use frequently nor turn into its main method of instruction. Instead, week-long seminars with such lectures should or could be held only once or twice a year. Study workshops are the youthful, interesting, democratic and attractive replacements of the old, rancid, stern, monotonous and anti-egalitarian methods of teaching.

What are the study workshops often held in certain sectors of Catholic Action actually like? An enumeration here is also fitting:

1. The audience should be normally limited to no more than a dozen persons; one of them, called leader or adviser, orients the work. As much as possible, this leader or adviser should have the same age and intellectual level as the others;

2. The leader should exclude carefully, in his way of acting, talking and orienting the work, any manifestation that would place him in the position of a professor or person exercising a function that implies superiority or preeminence. Just like the chief of a Communist cell, he should be the most accessible, approachable and unpretentious "*comrade*" of all present. The leader must fade in such a way as to minimize any suspicion that it is he who aptly, though disguisedly, leads the course of ideas;

3. The workshop can deal indistinctly with doctrinal matters, even high level ones, and the most complex and detailed practical matters. Any topics can be debated, from issues in sight of which a most serious theologian would stagger, to others whose complexity would make the most stalwart moralist hesitate;

4. Any well prepared lesson normally contains a clear definition of the terms of the problem to be studied; an enumeration of the principles applicable to the matter; an exposition of the different opinions that have been formulated on the subject; its critique; and a presentation of the professor's opinion and its foundation. On the contrary, in the workshop the leader must carefully hide his personal opinion and gradually

bring out the various aspects of the subject by asking questions to those present, who then air the issues in succession. For this purpose the leader must never personally join the debate by arguing with participants, but rather make them argue among themselves;

5. After a while, if the leader is skillful he will have succeeded in leading souls to the possession of the truth in an imperceptible way; the more capable the leader, the more spontaneous the debates will appear to be. Some people give the workshops a strong anti-intellectual note because they believe conclusions arise less from a chain of reasoning than from the vital spontaneity coming from the "*community*" and the various "*presences*" that spring from it;

6. The result of the workshop is supposed to be identical to that of a lesson, since it allegedly gave its participants the knowledge of truth, but in a livelier, more interesting and more convincing way. In a word, they acquired a vital knowledge, rather than the logical one formerly imparted by the old methods.

7. Each sector of Catholic Action must have a workshop for leaders, chaired preferably by a person of the central direction of Catholic Action. For their part, the latter repeat the workshops in each parish of the city and of the diocese.

### **What Is Good and What Is Bad about It**

As in the doctrines we have been refuting, we find here some truths, some utopias, and many errors:

1. It is true, unfortunately, that lessons today very often have an afflictive barrenness. The language of the professor is made of terms with which the student is not completely familiar. The issues discussed are woefully obsolete; and when debating them, the professor shows a radical incapacity to understand present-day matters. The exposition is made without any concern to use the thousand existing resources to make it smoother and easier for the students to pay attention. Worse, a large number of students are superficial and merely grade-oriented, dislike any intellectual effort no matter how small it might be, and finally lack desire to know the truth. All this concurs to place them on a much lower level than the one normally necessary to understand an exposition by the professor.

2. There is no question these drawbacks are quite lamentable and we should do our best to remedy them. However, this does not invalidate in any way the great truth that a class—the explanation by a professor in front of an audience whose main function is to listen and understand—is and will always be the

normal method of teaching. We do not want to discuss pedagogic issues here. So we will limit ourselves to recalling that even among the boldest defenders of the new school, very few would go as far as some exclusivists who believe workshops can dispense with any class and suffice in themselves to provide all or nearly all intellectual formation in religious matters. All the censures formulated against the new school by the Holy Father Pius XI in the Encyclical *Divini Illius Magister* apply fully to these exclusivists;

3. Were we to understand otherwise and believe that the traditional method of teaching by a professor is bankrupt, we would be led to think that Our Lord Jesus Christ endowed His Church with very poor resources when He instituted preaching as the method par excellence of her official teaching.

The famous maieutic of Socrates, an undoubtedly ingenious and fruitful process, does not serve as argument here, as it required students already endowed with high intellectual competence and a genuine Socrates to apply it. In the annals of teaching, maieutic remained an exception and no one would apply it as a normal and prevalent method of teaching even among philosophers of the stature of Aristotle or Saint Thomas. This is an evident proof that only someone with a very special and rare capability can use this method successfully;

4. Here we are touching one of the greatest errors committed by those who favor eliminating lessons as a teaching method. Any good teaching should not only provide the student with the possession of truth but also train him to make intellectual effort and accustom his intellect to the wide panorama of long-ranging doctrinal expositions and the vast systems of interconnected ideas that form imposing and fecund ideological structures. Now then, while a well-given class yields this fruit to a diligent and capable student, the study workshop, on the contrary, by its fragmentary aspect, has to normally represent chaos. Indeed, anyone who figures that a normal leader can conduct a debate within the limits already presented has renounced common sense. The technique analyzed here supposes that the leader knows how to insinuate the answers in such a way that the truth, so to speak, is born spontaneously from the debates. The most accomplished diplomats would at times find it difficult to orient in this way the digressions of a group of ten people lost in a maze of vast, interrelated doctrinal questions every one of which leads to yet a thousand more. Let us not nurture the illusion that workshop leaders have that capability, and even less that they would exist in sufficient numbers to serve our innumerable parishes.

For this very reason, workshops have given rise to countless equivocations and errors:

5. As conceived, the workshop method accustoms souls to debate the most varied problems without the necessary foundation and thereby deforms their intellect, turning pride into a habit. Pride generates rashness, which tempts people to set out to accomplish things beyond their strength. Minds thus accustomed to opine in matters they recognize more or less clearly as beyond their capacity, are proud intellects; obviously, therefore, workshops can be real schools of pride. "*Altiora te ne quaesieris*,"<sup>2</sup> says Saint Thomas to those who want to acquire the treasure of science.

6. To these intrinsic drawbacks, let us add others that affect workshops only in a merely circumstantial way and are important only as long as a lack of strong measures allows them to exist.

In practice, the task of preparing workshops has been often entrusted to persons still in adolescence, or possessing a culture such that they are totally inept for the job. We know the concrete case of a workshop woman leader who suddenly asked, during the session, whether cats have a soul. As this was a really impenetrably mystery for her, she felt confused and the workshop ended with the laughter of her friends—who were as little acquainted with the solution as she was. Now if we intend, as is unfortunately the case, hastily to disseminate workshops throughout Brazil's huge territory, what kind of leaders can we expect?

Furthermore, how can we expect our learned and zealous clergy to attend countless workshops by small groups of people inside the parish? And how can we expect orthodoxy to be kept in all the innumerable workshops without the presence of a priest?

From all that has been said we can deduce that the design to establish workshops as the exclusive or main process for religious instruction and general orientation of Catholic Action members is unacceptable from the didactic standpoint and can only stem from prejudice and tendencies that must not find harbor in a well-formed Catholic.

\* \* \*

## Should Catholic Action Use Workshops?

---

<sup>2</sup> "Don't look for things that are too high for you."

While we do not praise workshops done with the spirit and tendencies mentioned above, this does not mean that we plan or propose their complete elimination. On the contrary, we understand that well employed, they can be very useful to Catholic Action.

Workshops would function as complementary elements and would be very useful as long as the intent to make them the primordial means of teaching is renounced entirely and they are placed in their normal and traditional function.

The best of classes can never solve the multiple problems and objections stirred up in the students, nor will it be able to take care of a particular interest that each student might take in this or that aspect of the subject treated. For this reason, professor-student contacts outside the classroom always yield invaluable teaching results. Aiming to make such contacts more methodical and effective, several universities began to hold meetings between students and professors, named "seminars." They are designed to foster fruitful rapport between masters and disciples in an atmosphere of intimacy.

To make it even more advantageous, it was established that students should take a very active part in such meetings, producing specialized studies, asking questions and discussing among themselves under the vigilant authority of the professor or his assistant. In its structure this organization is only a couple of steps away from workshops: it shares with them all the flexibility and all the advantages springing from student initiatives, free discussion, etc. On the other hand, workshops differ from "*seminars*" in an essential point: "*Seminar*" sessions are based on a previous preparation of the classes and guaranteed by the presence of a professor who participates by exercising his teaching function, whereas workshops lack any preparation whatsoever on the part of its members, except for the leader, and are not guaranteed by the presence of any authority. The "*seminar*" is held to complete the work of the professor. The workshop is done to eliminate it.

The question of terminology obviously has a secondary importance here. As long as workshops become true "*seminars*" it does not matter what name they are given. In the meantime, what is capital is that workshops relinquish their reliance on science born of spontaneous generation and start to develop by means of classes and courses, which should always be the main instruments of formation in Catholic Action.

We do not consider indispensable that a workshop always be led by a priest. But if a lay person is given this task, he should have a degree of formation and instruction much greater than that of a simple Catechism teacher. As a rule, the latter only deals

with children, whereas a workshop leader generally deals with adolescents and adults. Thus, Catholic Action would be very wise to require special studies for such leaders, proportional to the intellectual demands of the ambience in which they work, and have them tested through examinations.

We will finish this chapter with a final consideration, though one of detail.

In preceding chapters we showed the concrete consequences of the doctrine that the ecclesiastical assistant is a mere doctrinal censor in the meetings of Catholic Action boards of directors. In practice, all effective power escapes from his hands and he is left only with a thankless veto function. True, he would still keep the appreciable task of forming members of Catholic Action. However, if all formation must be done in workshops, which normally should have no more than ten members, one can figure that in a 200-member group of Catholic Action the assistant would need to hold twenty meetings per week if he wanted to personally form all the members. Obviously, he would not have enough time and would be forced to form a small group that would in turn form the others. What a curious situation! In the final analysis, the assistant would lose any direct action over the bulk of the members, while the function of forming would remain in the hands of the same people who already claimed that of governing. Once again there is a clear analogy between the situation being sought for the ecclesiastical assistant and that of priests in the old confraternities of the time of Bishop Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira and Bishop Antonio de Macedo Costa.

\* \* \*

To close, we find it useful to summarize some of the principles on workshops that we have just enumerated:

1. Workshops cannot suffice to provide an intellectual and moral formation to members and interns of Catholic Action. Such formation must be imparted in lessons, conferences or lectures, by the ecclesiastical assistant or an authorized professor;

2. Nevertheless, as a complement of the work of the professor, and always under his direction, workshops can produce precious results.

3. In these workshops, the professor will retain his full authority. He will be not merely a president in charge of moderating overheated arguments: he will also be the authority who teaches and decides.

4. In workshops the professor should not hide his prerogatives in any way, but know how to use them with the necessary kindness to put participants at ease and let them freely pose the questions, doubts or objections they may wish to make;

5. The matters to be dealt with in the workshop should remain within a general order so as to prevent them from losing their connection to the lesson or course to which they should relate.



## **Part V**

# **Confirmation by the New Testament**



## Chapter 1

### Importance of This Chapter

In the course of our exposition, we have had occasion to quote Sacred Scripture repeatedly; but the reader will have noticed that citations from the Old Testament have appeared much more often than quotes from the New Testament.

This is because we deliberately reserved a special, broader chapter to analyze New Testament texts and particularly the position of the doctrines we defend in relation to those texts.

The advantage of a special study in this regard is obvious. We make the apology of doctrines of combat and force, combat for the good of course, and force at the service of truth. But the religious romanticism of the last century so disfigured the true notion of Catholicism in many circles that in the eyes of a large number of people, even in our time, it appears as a doctrine rather befitting the "*meek Rabbi of Galilee*" of whom Renan spoke than the God-Man the holy Gospels presented to us. While seemingly exalting Him, Renan's portrayal is a positivist and blasphemous depiction of Our Lord as a quasi-Rotarian miracle worker in his spirit and works.

It is habitually affirmed in this order of ideas that the New Testament instituted such a suave regime in relationships between God and man, and between man and his neighbor, that all sense of combat and severity has supposedly disappeared from Religion. Thus the warnings and threats of the Old Testament have become obsolete and man has been emancipated from any obligation to fear God or fight the enemies of the Church.

Without denying that in the law of grace there has been indeed a much more abundant effusion of divine mercy, we want to demonstrate that this most blissful event is sometimes attributed a greater scope than it really has. Thanks be to God, there is not one Catholic (however little his knowledge of the New Testament may be) who does not remember the episode narrated by Saint Luke which expresses in an admirable way the reign of mercy; a reign wider, more constant and more brilliant in the New Testament than in the Old. The Savior had been the object of insult in the city of Samaria:

*And when his disciples James and John had seen this, they said: Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them? And turning, he rebuked them, saying:*

*You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save. And they went into another town.*<sup>1</sup>

What an admirable lesson of kindness! And with what consoling and great frequency Our Lord repeated lessons like this! Let us have them engraved deeply in our hearts: but engraved in such a way as to leave room for other, no less important lessons from the Divine Master. He certainly preached mercy, but He did not preach systematical impunity for evil. If in the Gospel He often appears forgiving, He more than once also appears punishing or threatening. Let us learn from Him that there are circumstances that require forgiveness and in which it would be less perfect to punish; but that there are also circumstances that demand punishment and in which it would be less perfect to forgive. Let us not fall into a one-sidedness of which the adorable example of the Savior is an express condemnation, as He knew how to use at times forgiveness, and at other times punishment. Let us not forget the memorable event that Saint Luke relates above. Let us also not forget another episode symmetrical with the first, which constitutes a lesson in severity that harmoniously fits with that of divine kindness in one perfect whole. Let us listen to what the Lord said about Corozain and Bethsaida and learn from Him, not only the divine art of forgiving but also the no-less-divine art of threatening and punishing:

*Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? Thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*<sup>2</sup>

Note that the same Master who did not want to send fire from heaven upon the town of which we talked before, prophesied for Corozain and Bethsaida worse misfortunes than those of Sodom! Let us not tear any pages from the Holy Gospel but rather find elements of edification and imitation in somber pages as well as in luminous ones, since both are most wholesome gifts of God.

If mercy in the New Testament increased the effusion of grace, then justice, on the other hand, finds in the rejection of greater graces, greater crimes to punish. Both virtues, intimately intertwined, mutually support each other in the government of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 9:54-56.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 11:21-24.

world by God. It is not accurate, then, to claim that in the New Testament there is room only for forgiveness but not for punishment.

### **Sinners Before and After Christ**

Even after the Redemption, original sin continued to exist with its sad string of consequences upon man's intellect and will. On the other hand, men remained subject to being tempted by the devil. Accordingly, sin did not disappear from the earth and the Church continued sailing on a rough sea in which the obstinacy and malice of sinners raise obstacles against her that she must overcome at every moment. A quick glance at the history of the Church is enough to make this truth painfully obvious. But there is more: Grace sanctifies those who accept it, but a man's rejection of grace will make him worse than he was before receiving it. It is in this sense that the Apostle writes that the pagans converted to Christianity and later seduced by heresies, became worse than they were before becoming Christians. The worse criminal in history was certainly not the pagan who condemned Jesus Christ to death, nor the high priest who directed the course of events that culminated in the crucifixion, but the unfaithful apostle who sold his Master for thirty coins. *"The greater the height, the deeper the fall,"* says a proverb of our popular wisdom. What a profound and painful consonance this affirmation has with the teachings of theology!

Thus, in her journey Holy Mother Church must face men just as bad or even worse than those who revolted against God's law in Old Testament times. In his Encyclical, *Divini Redemptoris*, the Holy Father Pius XI says that in our time not only some men but *"entire peoples find themselves in danger of falling back into a barbarism worse than that which oppressed the greater part of the world at the coming of the Redeemer."*<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, the defense of the rights of the truth and the good, demands that the numerous enemies of the Church be humbled with greater vigor than ever. Accordingly, when prayers and kindness are not enough to overcome the adversary, a Catholic must be ready to effectively use all the legitimate weapons within his reach.

Note, in the following passages, how many, admirable examples of penetrating astuteness, untiring combativeness and heroic frankness are found in the New Testament. They clearly show

---

<sup>3</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, Mar. 19, 1937, no. 2, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19031937\\_divini-redemptoris\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19031937_divini-redemptoris_en.html)

that Our Lord was not a sentimental preacher but the infallible Master Who knew how to preach love with words and examples of an insuperable and admirable sweetness but also knew how to preach in word and deed, with an insuperable and no less adorable severity, the duty of vigilance, shrewdness, and an open and unrelenting combat against the enemies of the Church that kindness is unable to disarm.

\* \* \*

### **The "Cunning of the Serpent"**

Let us begin with the virtue of astuteness or, in other words, the evangelical virtue of serpentine cunning.

Our Lord insistently recommends prudence in countless instances, inculcating in the faithful that they should not have a blind and dangerous candor but their kindness should coexist with a lively and diligent love of the gifts of God; so lively and diligent that the faithful can recognize, despite a thousand false guises, enemies wishing to rob them. Let us examine a passage:

*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.<sup>4</sup>*

This passage is a small treatise on shrewdness. It begins by affirming that we must face not only overt enemies but also false friends, and that our eyes should therefore be vigilant not only against wolves approaching openly but also mindful of sheep to see whether under the white wool we might find the russet, poorly disguised coat of some cunning wolf. This means a Catholic must have an agile and penetrating mind, always on guard against appearances, and only surrender his trust to one who proves, after meticulous and shrewd examination, to be an authentic sheep.

But how can we discern a false sheep from a true sheep? "*By their fruit the false prophets will be recognized.*" Our Lord thus affirms that we must have the habit of analyzing attentively the doctrines and actions of our neighbor so as to know his fruits

---

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 7:15-20.

according to their true value and take precautions against them when they are bad.

This obligation is important to all the faithful, duty-bound as we are to reject false doctrines and seductions by friends who would lure us to evil or keep us in mediocrity. This duty is much graver for Catholic Action leaders, who have a much greater obligation to watch for themselves and for others and, through their astuteness and vigilance, to make sure that men possibly affiliated with doctrines or sects hostile to the Church are not allowed to remain among the faithful nor climb to posts of great responsibility. Woe to the leaders whose erroneous sense of candidness deadens the constant exercise of vigilance around themselves! They will lose a greater number of souls by their negligence than do many open enemies of Catholicism. Being in charge, under the direction of the hierarchy, of multiplying the talents, that is, the souls in the ranks of Catholic Action, they would not only bury the treasure but also allow it, by their "*good faith*," to fall into the hands of thieves. If Our Lord was so severe with the servant who did not make the talent yield fruit, what would He do to one who was asleep when the thief came in?

Let us go on to another passage.

*Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and before kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.*<sup>5</sup>

In general, this passage is believed to be a warning applicable only in times of open religious persecution, as it refers only to summons to tribunals, governors and kings and to scourging in synagogues. But keeping in mind what is happening in the world, it would be opportune to ask if there is any one country, nowadays, where we can rest assured this situation will not develop from one moment to the next.

At any rate, it would also be an error to suppose that Our Lord only recommends great prudence before manifest and serious danger and that as a habit a leader of Catholic Action can conveniently renounce the cunning of the serpent and cultivate only the simplicity of the dove. Indeed, whenever the salvation of a soul is at stake an infinite value is at stake, because the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for the salvation of each soul. A soul is a treasure greater than the sun and its loss is a much more grievous evil than all the physical or moral sufferings we

---

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 10:16-18.

could sustain tied to a scourging pillar or sitting on a defendant's bench.

Thus, a leader of Catholic Action has the absolute obligation to keep attentive and penetrating eyes like those of the serpent to discern every possible attempt at infiltration in the ranks of Catholic Action, and any other risks to which the salvation of souls in the sector entrusted to him could be exposed.

In this sense it is very opportune to quote another passage: *"Jesus answering, said to them: Take heed that no man seduce you: For many will come in my name saying, I am Christ: and they will seduce many."*<sup>6</sup> It is an error to suppose that the only risk to which Catholic ambiances can be exposed is the infiltration of clearly erroneous ideas. Just as the Antichrist will try to foist himself as the true Christ, erroneous doctrines will have their principles clothed in the appearance of truth and maliciously vested in a purported seal of the Church, thus promoting complacency, tolerance and accommodation—a slippery ramp on which, gradually and almost imperceptibly, one slides into sin.

Some lukewarm souls have a real passion for placing themselves on the borders of orthodoxy, riding as on horseback the wall that separates them from heresy; and from there they smile at evil without leaving good—or, rather, they smile at good without abandoning evil. Unfortunately, all this creates an atmosphere in which the *"sensus Christi"* disappears entirely and Catholic appearance is kept only on labels.

A leader of Catholic Action must counter all this by being vigilant, perspicacious, sagacious, clairvoyant and indefatigably punctilious in his observations, always bearing in mind that what certain books or counselors preach as Catholic is really not all Catholic. *"Take heed lest any man deceive you. For many shall come in my name saying, I am he; and they shall deceive many."*<sup>7</sup>

Here is another noteworthy passage:

*Now when he was at Jerusalem, at the pasch, upon the festival day, many believed in his name, seeing his signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that he knew all men. And because he needed not that any should give testimony of man: for he knew what was in man.*<sup>8</sup>

Here he clearly shows us that we must use all our resources to distinguish what may be inconsistent or flawed in the

---

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 24:4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Mark 13:5-6.

<sup>8</sup> John 2:23-25.



manifestations at times enthusiastic that Holy Mother Church can arouse. This was the example of the Master. Whenever necessary, He will not refuse a truly humble and detached apostle an even charismatic and supernatural light to discern true friends of the Church from false. Indeed, He who gave us the express recommendation to be vigilant will not refuse the graces necessary for it.

*Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood. I know that, after my departure, ravening wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*<sup>9</sup>

It is true that the obligation for vigilance contained in this passage refers directly only to bishops. But to the extent that Catholic Action is an instrument of the hierarchy, a living and intelligent instrument, it should also be on the lookout for ravenous wolves.

So as not to unduly prolong this exposition, we quote only a few more passages:

Saint Peter himself added yet this advice:

*You, therefore, brethren, knowing these things before, take heed, lest being led aside by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen.*<sup>10</sup>

Do not think that only a soul naturally inclined to mistrust can always practice such vigilance. We read in Saint Mark: "*And what I say to you, I say to **all**. Watch.*"<sup>11</sup> Saint John counsels with loving solicitude: "*Little children, let no man deceive you.*"<sup>12</sup>

So, astute and efficacious vigilance is a duty for all of us members of Catholic Action.

## **The Idolatry of Popularity**

As we said in another chapter, after the manly and courageous attitudes He gave us as an example, the reward of the Master was unpopularity. That unpopularity is for many the supreme disgrace, the scarecrow inspiring all concessions and all strategic retreats, and the sinister mark of every failed apostolate. In the

---

<sup>9</sup> Acts 20:28-29.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Pet. 3:17-18.

<sup>11</sup> Mark 13:37. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>12</sup> 1 John 3:7.

eyes of the world, Our Lord's unpopularity became such that they even accused Him of being harmful:

*And they that kept them fled: and coming into the city, told everything, and concerning them that had been possessed by the devils. And behold the whole city went out to meet Jesus and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart from their coasts.<sup>13</sup>*

Our Lord later predicted, to His faithful of all ages, the inevitable existence of enemies:

*The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall put them to death. And **you shall be hated by all men** for my name's sake.<sup>14</sup>*

As can be seen, hatred is taken to the point of arousing a ferocious fight against Jesus' followers. And the accusations against the faithful will be terrible! But not even then should they renounce bold apostolic action:

*The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household? Therefore fear them not. For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid, that shall not be known. That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops.<sup>15</sup>*

As we have said, the faithful should highly appreciate the esteem of their fellowmen, but should despise their hatred as long as it is based on aversion for Truth or Virtue. An apostle should desire his neighbor's conversion but should not confuse a man's or a people's sincere and deep conversion with signs of a superficial popularity. Our Lord performed His miracles to convert, but not to become popular: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet"<sup>16</sup> said He, thus indicating that no miracles useless for conversion would be performed. And, indeed, even though miracles would afford the Savior some popularity, it was a useless popularity as it did not stem from a desire to know the Truth.

How many apostles, nevertheless, try the possible and the impossible to become popular, even at the sacrifice of principles! They are perhaps unaware they thus lose the beatitude the Lord

---

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 8:33-34.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 10:21-22. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 10:24-27.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 12:39.

promised those who are hated by the enemies of the Church because of their love of orthodoxy and virtue:

*Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice; for behold, your reward is great in heaven.*<sup>17</sup>

Let us never sacrifice, diminish or deface the Truth, however great the hatred weighing upon us may be. Our Lord gave us the example by preaching the truth and the good and thus risking imprisonment:

*Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why seek you to kill me? The multitude answered, and said: Thou hast a devil; who seeketh to kill thee? Jesus answered and said to them: One work I have done; and you all wonder: Therefore, Moses gave you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and on the sabbath day you circumcise a man. If a man receive circumcision on the sabbath day, that the law of Moses may not be broken; are you angry at me because I have healed the whole man on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment.*

*Some therefore of Jerusalem said: Is not this he whom they seek to kill? And behold, he speaketh openly and they say nothing to him. Have the rulers known for a truth, that this is the Christ? But we know this man, whence he is: but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is. Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying: You both know me, and you know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me, is true, whom you know not. I know him, because I am from him, and he hath sent me. They sought therefore to apprehend Him: and no man laid hands on Him, because his hour was not yet come.*<sup>18</sup>

### **Evangelical Procedure toward Men of Evil Doctrine**

This is the advice of Saint James: "*Do not err, therefore, my dearest brethren.*"<sup>19</sup> Let us be very cautious, astute, shrewd and prudent in discerning good doctrine from bad.

But this is not enough. Doctrines assume a body in men. We should be astute, sagacious and cautious also in regard to men.

Let us know how to discern a foe and fight him with the weapons of charity and fortitude: "*Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times*"—these times that Pius XI found so similar to ours—"some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **spirits of**

---

<sup>17</sup> Luke 6:22-23.

<sup>18</sup> John 7:19-30.

<sup>19</sup> James 1:16.

**error** and doctrines of devils. **Speaking lies in hypocrisy** and having their conscience seared."<sup>20</sup>

As far as doctrines and indoctrinators are concerned, this advice is appropriate not only in the theological, philosophical, political, social and economic fields but also in any other field of interest to the Church:

*And this I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding: That you may approve the better things, that you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ.*"<sup>21</sup>

Indeed in this most sad age of ruin and corruption it would be inexplicable that there would not exist, as in the time of the Apostles, "false apostles, deceitful workmen" who infiltrate in the ranks of the children of light, "transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no wonder: for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers be transformed as the ministers of justice, whose end shall be according to their works."<sup>22</sup>

What other weapon is there against these ministers but the necessary astuteness to know how to distinguish, by their actions and doctrines, the children of light from those of darkness?

Vigilance against preachers of erroneous doctrines that are sweeter, easier and therefore more deceptive must not be only piercing but constant:

*Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not Christ Our Lord, but their own belly; and by pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent. For your obedience is published in every place. I rejoice therefore in you. But I would have you to be wise in good and **simple** in evil. And the God of peace crush Satan under your feet speedily. The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*"<sup>23</sup>

"Wise in good and simple in evil!" How many there are who only preach naiveté and candor at the service of good but possess a terrible wisdom to spread evil!

This serpentine, cunning wisdom for the good is a virtue absolutely as evangelical as the innocence of the dove:

---

<sup>20</sup> 1 Tim. 4:1-2. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>21</sup> Philippians 1:9-10.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 16:17-20. (Our emphasis.)

*Now this I say, that no man may deceive you by loftiness of words.*<sup>24</sup>

*Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy, and vain deceit; according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.*<sup>25</sup>

*Let no man seduce you, willing in humility, and religion of angels, walking in the things which he hath not seen, in vain puffed up by the sense of his flesh.*<sup>26</sup>

The Church is militant and we are her soldiers. Is it necessary to quote even more passages to prove that we must be not just any soldiers, but vigilant soldiers? Experience shows that the best military virtues are worthless without vigilance. Let this be enough to convince Catholic Action members that each one of them, like "*miles Christi*,"<sup>27</sup> must develop to a high degree not only the innocence of the dove but the cunning of the serpent if they want to follow the Holy Gospel in its integrity.

### **The "Common Ground" Tactic**

In the preceding chapter we spoke about the famous "*common ground tactic*." It consists in constantly avoiding any topic that can be a reason for discord between Catholics and non-Catholics and in emphasizing only what may be common to both.

Never acknowledge the separation of camps, never clarify ambiguities or define attitudes. As long as an individual is or calls himself a Catholic even if his attitudes and words are inconsistent with his ideas, his life differs from his beliefs and his very sincerity can be questioned, one should never take a strong attitude toward him, the excuse being, "*the bruised reed he shall not break; and smoking flax he shall not extinguish.*"<sup>28</sup> The following passage eloquently states how one should proceed in this delicate matter, proving that a just patience should never reach the limits of imprudence and imbecility:

*Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you in water unto penance, but he that shall come after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire. **Whose fan is in his hand, and he will***

---

<sup>24</sup> Col. 2:4.

<sup>25</sup> Col. 2:8.

<sup>26</sup> Col. 2:18.

<sup>27</sup> "A soldier of Christ."

<sup>28</sup> Matt. 12:20.

***thoroughly cleanse his floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.***<sup>29</sup>

As for hiding the reasons for disagreement that separate us from those who are only imperfectly ours, that is not what the Divine Master did in the numerous circumstances examined below:

The Pharisees led a life of piety, at least in appearance; and Our Lord, far from concealing the insufficiency of this appearance for fear of irritating and driving them even further away from Him, attacked them head on, saying to them:

*Not everyone that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.*<sup>30</sup>

Could this language cause irritation? Could it excite the hatred of the Pharisees against the Savior, instead of converting them? It does not matter. The Master could not make convenient but deceitful accommodations. For Himself and for His disciples of all ages, He preferred an open, declared struggle:

*Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it.*<sup>31</sup>

Like many people nowadays, with whom accommodating and pacifist souls always choose to temporize, the Pharisees also had "something good." However, they were not approached with the soothing practices of the common ground tactic. With impeccable logic, Our Lord verbally lashed at them:

*Either make the tree good and its fruit good: or make the tree evil, and its fruit evil. For by the fruit the tree is known. O generation of vipers, how can you speak good things, whereas you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good*

---

<sup>29</sup> Matt. 3:10-12. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>30</sup> Matt. 7:21-23.

<sup>31</sup> Matt. 10:34-39.

*things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*<sup>32</sup>

When experience showed that the Pharisees rejected the immense and adorable grace contained in the fulminating words of the Savior, and became even more revolted against Him, the Master did not change his tactic because of it:

*Then came His disciples, and said to Him: Dost Thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized? But he answering, said: Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit. And Peter answering, said to Him: Expound to us this parable. But He said: Are you also yet without understanding?*<sup>33</sup>

With this He showed that fear of displeasing and causing the guilty to revolt against the Church cannot be the only motive for our methods of apostolate. Yet, how many nowadays are like Saint Peter and the apostles "without understanding" and fail to grasp the admirable lesson of strength and combativeness the Divine Master gave us! Who among our romantic liberals would be capable of telling the modern persecutors of the Church:

*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law; judgment, and mercy, and faith. These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.*

*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you are like to whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness. So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; that build the sepulchers of the prophets, and adorn the monuments of the just, and say: If we had been in the days of our Fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you are witnesses against yourselves, that you are the sons of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*

---

<sup>32</sup> Matt. 12:33-35.

<sup>33</sup> Matt. 15:12-16.

*You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell? Therefore, behold I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you will put to death and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: That upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the just, even unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom you killed between the temple and the altar.*

*Amen I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.*<sup>34</sup>

Yet they are often no less wicked than the Pharisees, as they are not good even in their doctrine, are generally depraved and cause public scandals, adding to the corruption of the Pharisees the enormous sin of bad example and of taking pride in being evil. Once again we say that it is an error to imagine that today there are no longer people as bad as those who existed in the times of Our Lord: Pius XI deemed us on the edge of an abyss deeper than the one wherein the world lay before Redemption. However, how numerous are those who would foolishly fear sinning against charity were they to address to adversaries of the Church such a vehement reprimand!

Our Lord said of the Pharisees: *"Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."*<sup>35</sup>

How we would imitate the Divine Master well if we were to say of today's corrupt materialists: "You blaspheme God with your lips and your heart is far from Him."

Our Lord clearly foresaw that this process would always irritate certain enemies against the Church:

*And the brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son; and children shall rise up against the parents, and shall work their death. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved.*<sup>36</sup>

But the highest form of charity consists precisely in doing good by means of clear, and if needed, heroically sharp advice to the very people who might pay back such benefit by putting us to death.

This is why Our Lord said to those who would later kill Him, but who then applauded Him: *"Amen, amen I say to you, you seek me, not*

---

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 23:23-36.

<sup>35</sup> Mark 7:6.

<sup>36</sup> Mark 13:12-13.



*because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*"<sup>37</sup>

It is an error to systematically hide from a sinner his true state. For example, Saint John did not hesitate to say: "*He that committeth sin is of the devil.*"<sup>38</sup> And for this reason the Apostle of love very categorically wrote,

*Whosoever revolteth, and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that continueth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him, God speed you. For he that saith unto him God speed you, communicateth with his wicked works.*<sup>39</sup>

And on another occasion he affirmed:

*I had written perhaps to the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, doth not receive us. For this cause, if I come, I will advertise his works which he doth, with malicious words prating against us. And as if these things were not enough for him, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that do receive them he forbideth, and casteth out of the church.*<sup>40</sup>

In a manly attitude against the enemies of the Church and in full agreement with the New Testament, he wrote:

*I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil, and thou hast tried them, who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.*<sup>41</sup>

And for this reason we also read in the Apocalypse: "*But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate.*"<sup>42</sup>

In short, when used not as an exception but in a frequent and habitual way, the so-called "*common ground tactic*" is the canonization of human respect; and by inducing the faithful to dissimulate their Faith, it is an open violation of the words of the adorable Master:

*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men.*

---

<sup>37</sup> John 6:26.

<sup>38</sup> 1 John 3:8.

<sup>39</sup> 2 John 9-11.

<sup>40</sup> 3 John 9-10.

<sup>41</sup> Apoc. 2:2.

<sup>42</sup> Apoc. 2:6.

*You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. **So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.***<sup>43</sup>

As for the advice given in certain circles of Catholic Action to hide from newcomers the difficulties of the spiritual life and the ensuing interior struggles, note Our Lord's totally different attitude as he told the souls he wanted to attract this terrible truth: "*And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.*"<sup>44</sup> And he also declared:

*And if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life, maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet, to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.*

*And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.*<sup>45</sup>

But, someone might object, does this language not repel souls? Cold, hard, lukewarm souls, yes. But if Our Lord did not want to have such souls among His own, and used a language apt to drive those useless elements away from Himself, do we want to be wiser, kinder and more compassionate than the God-Man and call to us those He did not want?

The apostles understood and followed the example of the Master.

Some souls in our time are so easily satisfied that they see any politician who speaks of God in one speech or another as a highly authentic and trustworthy Roman Catholic. This is the tactic of seeing what unites us but not what separates us. Who would utter to one of these vague "*deists*" in certain liberal circles the terrible words of Saint James: "*Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble.*"<sup>46</sup> And who would tell many sybarites of our times:

*Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted: and your garments*

---

<sup>43</sup> Matt. 5:13-16. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>44</sup> Matt. 11:12.

<sup>45</sup> Mark 9:42-47.

<sup>46</sup> James 2:19.

are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered: and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days.

Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

You have feasted upon earth: and in riotousness you have nourished your hearts, in the day of slaughter.

You have condemned and put to death the Just One, and he resisted you not.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, this is the conduct of a Christian whose saintly, bold spirit does not tolerate subterfuge or sinuosity in matters of Faith. How should we do apostolate? With the weapons of frankness: "But let your speech be, yea, yea: no, no: that you fall not under judgment."<sup>48</sup>

If we do not declare our Faith in word and deed, we will not be doing apostolate: we will be hiding the light of Christ that shines in us and should, from our interior, overflow to light up the world: "that you may be blameless, and sincere children of God, without reproof, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: **among whom you shine as lights of the world.**"<sup>49</sup>

Let us flee from nothing and be ashamed of nothing:

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power, and of love, and of sobriety. Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of Our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but labor with the Gospel, according to the power of God.<sup>50</sup>

Are there causes for friction in this attitude? It does not matter. We must live "with one mind laboring together for the faith of the Gospel. And in nothing be ye terrified by the adversaries: which to them is a cause of perdition, but to you of salvation, and this from God."<sup>51</sup>

Any charity anyone tries to exercise to the detriment of that rule is false: "Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good."<sup>52</sup>

Once again we insist: if anyone flees from the austerities of the Church, let him flee; for he is not numbered with the elect.

---

<sup>47</sup> James 5:1-6.

<sup>48</sup> James 5:12.

<sup>49</sup> Phil. 2:15. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>50</sup> 2 Tim. 1:7-8.

<sup>51</sup> Phil. 1:27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Rom. 12:9.

*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not in wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ should be made void. For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world, by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe. For both the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumblingblock, and unto the Gentiles foolishness: But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.<sup>53</sup>*

It is hard to always act this way; but a manly soul, supported by grace, can do everything: *"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened."<sup>54</sup>*

On the other hand, those unwilling to fight should renounce the life of Catholics, which is a ceaseless struggle, as the Apostle insistently warns in detail:

*Finally, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power. Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).*

*By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints: And for me, that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the gospel. For which I am ambassador in a chain, so that therein I may be bold to speak according as I ought.<sup>55</sup>*

We find no other doctrine in the life of the Divine Savior:

---

<sup>53</sup> 1 Cor. 1:17-24.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Cor. 16:13.

<sup>55</sup> Ephes. 6:10-20.

*The Jews therefore answered, and said to Him: Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?*

*Jesus answered: I have not a devil: but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever.*

*The Jews therefore said: Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead and the prophets; and you sayest: If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom does thou make thyself?*

*Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God. And you have not known him, but I know him. And if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him, and do keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad.*

*The Jews therefore said to him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?*

*Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the Temple.<sup>56</sup>*

And Our Lord was accused not only of being possessed but also blasphemous:

*The Jews then took up stones to stone him. Jesus answered them: Many good works I have showed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me?*

*The Jews answered him: For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.<sup>57</sup>*

### **In Our Lord's Steps, Let Us Not Give Up When Our Practice of Apostolic Frankness Seems to Have Failed**

Let us not seek instant success and fleeting applause from the crowds or even from our adversaries; such are fruits of the common ground tactic.

Our Lord often shows us that we should despise popularity among the wicked: *"A prophet is not without honor, save in his own*

---

<sup>56</sup> John 8:48-59.

<sup>57</sup> John 10:31-33.

country, and in his own house. And he wrought not many miracles there, **because of their unbelief.**"<sup>58</sup>

As some would have it, the supreme triumph of a Catholic work is not the blessings and praise of the hierarchy, but the applause of the adversary. This criterion is fallacious because, among a thousand other reasons, at times it contains a mere ambush in which we fall, and in fact we sacrifice principle at this price: *"Woe to you when men shall bless you: for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets."*<sup>59</sup> *"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. **And he left them, and went away.**"*<sup>60</sup> Our Lord went away but we, instead, wish to stay on the barren field, distorting and diminishing truths until we draw applause. When applause comes, it will be, in many cases, the sign that we have become false prophets.

True, Our Lord has pity on those who are not so hardened in evil that they could not be saved by a miracle:

*And looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts, he saith to the man: Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth: and his hand was restored unto him.*<sup>61</sup>

But many will perish in their blindness:

*And he said to them: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand: lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*<sup>62</sup>

In view of so much severity, it is not surprising that the *"meek Rabbi of Galilee"* would at times inspire real terror even in his intimate friends: *"But they understood not the word, and they were afraid to ask him."*<sup>63</sup>

Being an apostle means to live fighting rather than receiving praise, as shown by the prophecy below, which certainly would cause no smaller terror:

*But look to yourselves. For they shall deliver you up to the councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten, and you*

---

<sup>58</sup> Matt. 13:57-58. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>59</sup> Luke 6:26.

<sup>60</sup> Matt. 16:4. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>61</sup> Mark 3:5.

<sup>62</sup> Mark 4:11-12.

<sup>63</sup> Mark 9:31.

*shall stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony unto them.*<sup>64</sup>

Why so much hatred for the preachers of Good? "I know that you are the children of Abraham: but you seek to kill me, **because my word hath no place in you.**"<sup>65</sup>

In all ages there will be hearts in which the word of the Church will have no place. These hearts will then fill with hatred and try to ridicule, diminish, calumniate, lead to apostasy and even kill the disciples of Our Lord.

Also for this reason, Our Lord said to the Jews:

*But now you seek to kill me, a man who have spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God. This Abraham did not. You do the works of your father. They said therefore to him: We are not born of fornication: we have one Father, even God. Jesus therefore said to them: If God were your Father, you would indeed love me. For from God I proceeded, and came; for I came not of myself, but he sent me: Why do you not know my speech? Because you cannot hear my word.*<sup>66</sup>

It is no wonder, then, that His very miracles aroused hatred. This is what happened after the awesome miracle of Lazarus' resurrection:

*Jesus said to them: Loose him, and let him go. Many therefore of the Jews, who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done.*<sup>67</sup>

In view of all this, how can the apostles hope to be always esteemed by all? Do they not notice that this general esteem often contains an unmistakable sign that they are no longer with Our Lord?

Indeed, every true Catholic will have enemies:

*If the world hate you, know ye, that it hath hated me before you. **If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.***

*Remember my word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. **If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you:** if they have kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you **for my name's sake:** because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come, and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they*

---

<sup>64</sup> Mark 13:9.

<sup>65</sup> John 8:37. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>66</sup> John 8:40-43.

<sup>67</sup> John 11:44-46.

*have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also.*<sup>68</sup>

The following passage is also in the same sense:

*These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized. They will put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God.*<sup>69</sup>

And also:

*I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world; as I also am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil.*<sup>70</sup>

As for the barren and worthless praises of the devil and his henchmen, let us see how they should be dealt with:

*And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain girl, having a pythonical spirit, met us, who brought to her masters much gain by divining. This same following Paul and us, cried out, saying: These men are the servants of the most high God, who preach unto you the way of salvation. And this she did many days. But Paul being grieved, turned, and said to the spirit: I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to go out from her. And he went out the same hour.*<sup>71</sup>

We should indeed be glad when, from the enemy camp, we get a word of praise from some soul that, touched by grace, begins to approach us. But how different this applause is from the fallacious and turbulent joy displayed by the wicked when certain naïve apostles present them with maimed and mutilated truths similar to the errors of impiety! Applause in this case does not signify a movement of souls toward good but the joy they experience imagining the Church does not want to wrench them from evil. This is the applause of one who rejoices in being able to continue in sin, and it means an even greater hardening in evil. This applause we must avoid. Hence, he who is not resigned with being unpopular collides with the New Testament: "*Wonder not, brethren, if the world hate you.*"<sup>72</sup>

Irritating the wicked is often the fruit of most noble actions:

*And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry and shall send gifts one to another, because these*

---

<sup>68</sup> John 15:18-23. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>69</sup> John 16:1-2.

<sup>70</sup> John 17:14-15.

<sup>71</sup> Acts 16:16-18.

<sup>72</sup> 1 John 3:13.



*two prophets tormented them [the wicked] that dwelt upon the earth.*<sup>73</sup>

Those who think that Catholic doctrine will unanimously draw applause when preached in an exemplary way by word and deed, are in serious error. Saint Paul says: "*And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.*"<sup>74</sup> As this passage shows, a pious life is what exacerbates the hatred of the wicked. The Church is not hated for the imperfections found in this or that of her representatives through the ages. These imperfections are almost always mere pretexts for the wicked in their hatred to wound that which the Church has of divine.

The good odor of Christ is a perfume of love for those who are saved, but it stirs up hatred in those who are lost: "*For we are the good odor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one indeed the odor of death unto death: but to the others the odor of life unto life.*"<sup>75</sup>

Like Our Lord, the Church has to the highest degree the capability of making herself loved by individuals, families, peoples and entire races. But by the same token she has, like Our Lord, the attribute of seeing the unjust hatred of individuals, families, peoples and entire races rise up against her. A true apostle could not care less if he is loved when such love is not an expression of that love which souls have, or at least begin to have for God, or otherwise does not lead to the Kingdom of God. Any other popularity is useless for him and for the Church. Thus, Saint Paul says: "*For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*"<sup>76</sup>

As we can see, the approval of men should frighten an apostle with a delicate conscience, rather than make him happy: could he have neglected doctrinal purity to become so widely esteemed? Is he certain that he castigated impiety as his duty called for? Would he really be in one of those situations like Our Lord's on Palm Sunday? If so, a warning: remember the worth of human applause and do not be attached to it. Tomorrow, perhaps, false prophets will appear who will attract the people by preaching a less austere doctrine. And the man still applauded on the eve should tell those who praised him:

*Am I then become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?  
They (the false apostles) are zealous in your regard not well:*

---

<sup>73</sup> Apoc. 11:10.

<sup>74</sup> 2 Tim. 3:12.

<sup>75</sup> 2 Cor. 2:15-16.

<sup>76</sup> Gal. 1:10.

*but they would exclude you, that you might be zealous for them. But be zealous for that which is good in a good thing always: and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you. And I would willingly be present with you now, and change my voice: because I am ashamed of you.*<sup>77</sup>

But this language cannot be changed: the interest of souls prevents it. And if this warning were to go unheeded, the popularity of the apostle will wreck once and for all.

Then, if he lacks a detached and manly supernatural spirit, behold him tagging along after those who abandon him. There he goes diluting principles, corroding and defacing truths, diminishing and cheapening precepts to save the last fragments of that popularity which he had unconsciously turned into an idol.

How could such behavior compare with that of Our Lord Who, though deeply saddened took his direct and courageous fight against impiety even unto death, and death on the Cross?

While truths clearly spoken at times lead the perverse to become even more hardened in evil, great is the joy of an apostle who manages to overcome his own pacifist spirit and with strong blows, to save souls.

*For although I made you sorrowful by my epistle, I do not repent; and if I did repent, seeing that the same epistle (although but for a time) did make you sorrowful; Now I am glad; not because you were made sorrowful; but because you were made sorrowful unto penance. For you were made sorrowful according to God, that you might suffer damage by us in nothing. For the sorrow that is according to God worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation; but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that you were made sorrowful according to God, how great carefulness it worketh in you; yea defense, yea indignation, yea fear, yea desire [to remedying the evil], yea zeal, yea revenge [of the insult made to the Church], in all things you have showed yourselves to be undefiled in the matter.*<sup>78</sup>

This is the great, the admirable reward of apostles who are supernatural and clear-sighted enough not to make popularity the only rule and supreme desire of their apostolate.

Let us not retreat facing momentary failures, and Our Lord will not refuse identical consolations to our apostolate, the only ones we should long for.

## **The Preaching of Austere Truths**

<sup>77</sup> Gal. 4:16-20.

<sup>78</sup> 2 Cor. 7:8-11. (Saint Paul refers to the case of an incestuous person, mentioned in the first epistle.)

Some souls deeply penetrated by liberalism have claimed that the faithful, imitating the most sweet Savior, should never include in their incitements to do good any kind of threats of future punishments, as a language full of such warnings is inappropriate for heralds of the Religion of love.

Obviously, apprehension over future punishments should not be the only motivation for virtue. This reservation made, we do not see where these liberals got the idea that it is a fault against charity to speak about hell. Let us see how the apostles spoke about the punishments we deserve after death, in hell or in purgatory:

*Seeing it is a just thing with God to repay tribulation to them that trouble you. And to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with the angels of his power: In a flame of fire, giving vengeance to them who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be made wonderful in all them who have believed; because our testimony was believed upon you in that day.*<sup>79</sup>

And Our Lord said of purgatory: "Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing."<sup>80</sup>

In regard to hell, let us hear the words of the sweetest Master:

*Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!*<sup>81</sup>

*And Jesus hearing this, marveled; and said to them that followed him: Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*<sup>82</sup>

*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words: going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet. Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.*<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> 2 Thess. 1:6-10.

<sup>80</sup> Matt. 5:26.

<sup>81</sup> Matt. 7:13-14.

<sup>82</sup> Matt. 8:10-12.

<sup>83</sup> Matt. 10:14-15.

*But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*<sup>84</sup>

*The queen of the south shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon here.*<sup>85</sup>

*Wonder not at this: for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.*<sup>86</sup>

Let us see other passages from the New Testament:

*The Lord delayeth not his promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it, shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness? Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat? But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to his promises, in which justice dwelleth.*<sup>87</sup>

*And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword; that with it he may strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty.*<sup>88</sup>

*He that shall overcome shall possess these things, and I will be his God; and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*<sup>89</sup>

## **Let Us Preach Mortification and the Cross**

---

<sup>84</sup> Matt. 12:36-37.

<sup>85</sup> Matt. 12:42.

<sup>86</sup> John 5:28-29.

<sup>87</sup> 2 Peter 3:9-13.

<sup>88</sup> Apoc. 19:15.

<sup>89</sup> Apoc. 21:7-8.

As for those who think that the New Testament opened for us a new era of a spiritual life without struggle, how they fool themselves! On the contrary, Saint Paul puts before our eyes the perspective of a ceaseless fight of man against his lower inclinations, a struggle so painful that the Apostle even compares it to the worst of martyrdoms, that is, Crucifixion:

*I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another; so that you do not the things that you would. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like. Of the which I foretell you as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. Against such there is no law. **And they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.** If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.<sup>90</sup>*

How carefully must a Christian watch over the ever fragile building of his sanctification, put to the test by all sorts of interior and exterior trials! Let us read this passage:

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence may be of the power of God, and not of us. In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not. Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.*

*For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake; that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.<sup>91</sup>*

It would be pride or naiveté to imagine that we do not encounter terrible interior reluctances:

*For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good which I will; but the evil which I hate, that I do.<sup>92</sup>*

*For I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will, is present with me;*

<sup>90</sup> Gal. 5:16-25. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>91</sup> 2 Cor. 4:7-12. This last verse means that St. Paul died to himself in order to give spiritual life to others. The aforementioned virtue, is the virtue of preaching, that is, the virtue of apostolate.

<sup>92</sup> Rom. 7:14-15.

but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do.<sup>93</sup>

*I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver from the body of this death?*<sup>94</sup>

This combat is hard, but we do not reach glory without it: "And if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."<sup>95</sup> The works of apostolate alone, without mortification are not enough for this end:

*I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air: But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.*<sup>96</sup>

So let our interior life be one of vigilance: "Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."<sup>97</sup>

The conclusion cannot fail to be this one:

*Finally, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power. Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God). By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints: And for me, that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the gospel. For which I am an ambassador in a chain, so that therein I may be bold to speak according as I ought.*<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Rom. 7:18-19.

<sup>94</sup> Rom. 7:21-24.

<sup>95</sup> Rom. 8:17.

<sup>96</sup> 1 Cor. 9:26-27.

<sup>97</sup> 1 Cor. 10:12.

<sup>98</sup> Ephes. 6:10-20.

## **Fortitude and Sagacity in the New Testament**

The passages of the New Testament in which the divine mercy of our most sweet Savior shines forth are all well-known among the faithful. Let us thank God for this a thousand times. Unfortunately, however, excerpts that give examples of severity, astuteness and holy intransigence are much less known. We have quoted some of these passages in the preceding pages. However, in order to make it clear that those are not the only ones and in fact the New Testament gives us extraordinarily frequent examples of courage, sagacity and fortitude, let us now examine a great number of passages that teach these virtues, and which we did not have an occasion to quote. This will bring to light the most important role these three virtues play in the Good News of the Son of God and, consequently, should also play in the character of every well-formed Catholic.

We intend to show more particularly in this chapter the numerous passages from the New Testament in which sinners are rebuked or the vices of pagan antiquity or the Jewish world are scourged, in a language that, to people of our time, would seem completely lacking in charity.

Note, in this regard, that the Holy Father Pius XI as we have insistently stated, made such a severe description of our time that he said we are in times similar to the latter ones, that is, in an age of truly unprecedented iniquities. So, do not think that sins and sinners worthy of the same language are nowhere to be found today. What is, then, this misguided charity that dulls the word of God on our lips, turning the regenerating scourge of peoples into an innocuous weapon whose missing edge expresses rather our timidity than the indignation of our zeal?

Even here—we insist—we must imitate the Savior who knew how to alternate the severity of language with proofs of an infinite love of such sweetness and meekness as to touch all upright hearts. Let us never forget the supreme role of love in the economy of the apostolate. But let us not fall into a narrow one-sidedness. Not all hearts open up to the action of grace. Saint Peter says:

*Wherefore it is said in the scripture: "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious. And he that shall believe in him, shall not be confounded." To you therefore that believe, he is honor: but to them that believe not, "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner." And*

*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal, to them who stumble at the word neither do believe, whereunto also they are set.*<sup>99</sup>

And for those who are unwilling to accept the sweet language of love there is only one method, which is this language:

*Adulterers, know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God. Or do you think that the scripture says in vain: "To envy doth the spirit covet which dwelleth in you?"*<sup>100</sup>

Let us frankly encourage souls to penance: *"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow."*<sup>101</sup>

And let us not try to do apostolate in such a way that we omit the terrible side of the sweetest truths we preach:

*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ should be made void. For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world, by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe. For both the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumblingblock, and unto the Gentiles foolishness: But unto them that are called (to salvation), both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*<sup>102</sup>

*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the Spirit and power; that your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*<sup>103</sup>

Let us not seek out a language that does not create malcontents, because an upright apostolate begets them in a large numbers.

---

<sup>99</sup> 1 Pet. 2:6-8.

<sup>100</sup> James 4:4-5.

<sup>101</sup> James 4:9.

<sup>102</sup> 1 Cor. 1:17-24.

<sup>103</sup> 1 Cor. 2:1-5.



Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we may know the things that are given us from God. Which things also we speak, not in the learned words of human wisdom; but in the doctrine of the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined. But the spiritual man judgeth all things; and he himself is judged of no man.<sup>104</sup>

Sometimes we will be seen as madmen, but it does not matter:

*Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "I will catch the wise in their own craftiness."<sup>105</sup>*

Sometimes, the sacrifice an apostle makes by immolating his reputation makes his apostolate wondrously fruitful:

*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness; it shall rise in power.<sup>106</sup>*

At times, contrivances made to please "everybody and his brother" reach objectionable refinement:

*For our exhortation was not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in deceit: But as we were approved by God that the gospel should be committed to us: even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who proveth our hearts. For neither have we used, at any time, the speech of flattery, as you know; nor taken an occasion of covetousness, God is witness.<sup>107</sup>*

Let us see how the Apostles spoke, and how strongly they assailed the wicked: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."<sup>108</sup>

Were we to say the following words to one of today's sybarites, how they would accuse us of exaggeration!

*For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the*

---

<sup>104</sup> 1 Cor. 2:12-15.

<sup>105</sup> 1 Cor. 3:18-19.

<sup>106</sup> 1 Cor. 15:42-43.

<sup>107</sup> 1 Thess. 2:3-5.

<sup>108</sup> Philip. 3:2. (Concision refers to those who preached circumcision.)

*body of his glory, according to the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things unto himself.*<sup>109</sup>

And if we said about heretics the words below, how many critics would turn against us:

*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the sound words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to that doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but sick about questions and strifes of words; from which arise envies, contentions, blasphemies, evil suspicions, conflicts of men corrupted in mind, and who are destitute of the truth, supposing gain to be godliness.*<sup>110</sup>

Some people always consider individual references objectionable. Yet Saint Paul was far from generalizing:

*Hold the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith, and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us. Thou knowest this, that all they who are in Asia, are turned away from me: of whom are Phigellus and Hermogenes.*<sup>111</sup>

*But shun profane and vain babblings: for they grow much toward ungodliness. And their speech spreadeth like a canker: of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus: Who have erred from the truth, saying, that the resurrection is past already, and have subverted the faith of some.*<sup>112</sup>

*Alexander the coppersmith hath done me much evil; the Lord will reward him according to his works. Whom do thou also avoid; for he hath greatly withstood our words.*<sup>113</sup>

And the Apostle even boasted of his holy roughness:

*But that I may not be thought as it were to terrify you by epistles, (for his epistles indeed, say they, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible), let such a one think this, that **such as we are in word by epistles, when absent, such also we will be indeed when present.***<sup>114</sup>

This time the reference encompassed all the vast, cultured and numerous population of an island:

*For there are also many disobedient, vain talkers and seducers: especially they who are of the circumcision: Who must be reprov'd, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of them a prophet of*

---

<sup>109</sup> Philip. 3:18-21.

<sup>110</sup> 1 Tim. 6:3-5.

<sup>111</sup> 2 Tim. 1:13-15.

<sup>112</sup> 2 Tim. 2:16-18.

<sup>113</sup> 2 Tim. 4, 14-15.

<sup>114</sup> 2 Cor. 10:9-11. (Our emphasis.)

*their own, said, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies." **This testimony is true.** Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, who turn themselves away from the truth.*<sup>115</sup>

Let us listen to this apostolically severe criticism: *"They profess that they know God: but in their works they deny him; being abominable, and incredulous, and to every good work reprobate."*<sup>116</sup>

Does it seem excessive? Nevertheless to reprimand is a duty of apostolate: *"These things speak, and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."*<sup>117</sup>

So why would we fear to exhort as vigorously as the Apostle?

We saw what the Apostle said about Crete. Here are the words he thought useful to convert Greeks and Jews:

*For we have charged both Jews, and Greeks, that they are all under sin. As it is written: "There is not any man just. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. All have turned out of the way; they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, there is not so much as one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have dealt deceitfully. The venom of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet swift to shed blood: destruction and misery in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know, that what things soever the law speaketh, it speaketh to them that are in the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be made subject to God.*<sup>118</sup>

Saint Paul said against impurity:

*Meat for the belly, and the belly for the meats; but God shall destroy both it and them: but the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Now God hath both raised up the Lord, and will raise us up also by his power. Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.*<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> Titus 1:10-14. (Our emphasis.)

<sup>116</sup> Titus 1:16.

<sup>117</sup> Titus 2:15.

<sup>118</sup> Rom. 3:9-19.

<sup>119</sup> 1 Cor. 6:13-15.

Our Lord began his public life not with festive words but preaching penance: *"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*<sup>120</sup>

At times, His words against the impenitent were terrible:

*Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein were done the most of his miracles, for that they had not done penance. Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes.*

*But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? Thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

*At that time Jesus answered and said: I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.*<sup>121</sup>

Thus spoke Our Lord:

*And when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation.*<sup>122</sup>

Saint Peter, with an overly human concern, advised Him not to go to Jerusalem where they wanted to kill Him. The answer was majestically severe: *"Who turning, said to Peter: 'Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me: because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.'*"<sup>123</sup>

Full of mercy, Our Lord was ready to work a miracle. Behold, however, what He said before doing it:

*Then Jesus answered and said: "O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me." And Jesus rebuked him, and the devil went out of him, and the child was cured from that hour.*<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> Matt. 4:17.

<sup>121</sup> Matt. 11:20-25.

<sup>122</sup> Matt. 12:43-45.

<sup>123</sup> Matt. 16:23.

<sup>124</sup> Matt. 17:16-17.

And to the vendors he scourged, Our Lord fulminated: *"It is written: 'My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.'*"<sup>125</sup>

Could there be a sharper censure than this of Our Lord to the proud Pharisees?

*Amen I say to you, that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of justice, and you did not believe him. But the publicans and the harlots believed him; but you, seeing it, did not even afterward repent, that you might believe him.*<sup>126</sup>

And this other one:

*But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter.*

*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers. For this you shall receive the greater judgment.*

*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves.*

*Woe to you blind guides, that say, whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but he that shall swear by the gold of the temple, is a debtor. Ye foolish and blind; for which is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold?*

*And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, is a debtor. Ye blind: for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift?*<sup>127</sup>

How much mercy and yet how much severity in these words of the Mother of all mercy:

*And his mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear him.*

*He hath showed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.*

*He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.*

*He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Matt. 21:13.

<sup>126</sup> Matt. 21:31-32.

<sup>127</sup> Matt. 23:13-19.

<sup>128</sup> Luke 1:50-53.

Let us imitate Our Lord when He welcomed sinners with divine gentleness. However, let us not be one-sided but also know how to imitate Him in attitudes such as:

*And the pasch of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple them that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, he drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers he poured out, and the tables he overthrew. And to them that sold doves he said: Take these things hence, and make not the house of my Father a house of traffic.<sup>129</sup>*

No Apostle gives us a better idea of Jesus' love than Saint John. Nonetheless, let us see how he does not hide the severity of the Master:

*Amen, amen I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony. If I have spoken to you earthly things, and you believe not; how will you believe, if I shall speak to you heavenly things?<sup>130</sup>*

*But I have greater testimony than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to perfect; the works themselves, which I do, give testimony of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself who hath sent me, hath given testimony of me: neither have you heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.*

*And you have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him you believe not. Search the scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that give testimony of me. And you will not come to me that you may have life. I receive not glory from men. But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.*

*I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive glory one from another: and the glory which is from God alone, you do not seek?*

*Think not that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one that accuseth you, Moses, in whom you trust. For if you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?<sup>131</sup>*

Oh! How the Master showed us that we must face incomprehension from our neighbors without distorting doctrine to please them:

---

<sup>129</sup> John 2:13-16.

<sup>130</sup> John 3:11-12.

<sup>131</sup> John 5:36-47.

Many therefore of his disciples, hearing it, said: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself, that his disciples murmured at this, said to them: "Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life. But there are some of you that believe not." For Jesus knew from the beginning, who they were that did not believe, and who he was, that would betray him.

And he said: "Therefore did I say to you, that no man can come to me unless it be given him by my Father." After this many of his disciples went back; and walked no more with him.

Then Jesus said to the twelve: "Will you also go away?" And Simon Peter answered him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus answered them: "Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil?" Now he meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for this same was about to betray him, whereas he was one of the twelve.<sup>132</sup>

The intransigence of his language was no less divine than his meekness:

Again therefore Jesus said to them: "I go, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin. Whither I go, you cannot come." The Jews therefore said: "Will he kill himself, because he said: Whither I go, you cannot come?"

And he said to them: "You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you, that you shall die in your sins. For if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sin." They said therefore to him: "Who are thou?" Jesus said to them: "The beginning, who also speaks unto you. Many things I have to speak and to judge of you. But he that sent me, is true: and the things I have heard of him, these same I speak in the world."<sup>133</sup>

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof."<sup>134</sup>

And Saint Peter, the first Pope, knew how to imitate this example:

---

<sup>132</sup> John 6:61-72.

<sup>133</sup> John 8:21-26.

<sup>134</sup> John 8:44.

But Peter said to him: "Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter. For thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Do penance therefore for this thy wickedness; and pray to God, that perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I see thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity."<sup>135</sup>

Let us see another magnificent example of combativeness:

And when they had gone through the whole island, as far as Paphos, they found a certain man, a magician, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesu, who was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, a prudent man. He sending for Barnabas and Saul, desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas, the magician (for so his name is interpreted) withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, otherwise Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, looking upon him, said: "O full of all guile, and of all deceit, child of the devil, enemy of all justice, thou ceasest not to pervert the right ways of the Lord. And now behold the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately there fell a mist and darkness upon him, and going about, he sought someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul, when he had seen what was done, believed, admiring at the doctrine of the Lord.<sup>136</sup>

And this one:

And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, bringing in the name of the Lord Jesus; and he persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was earnest in preaching, testifying to the Jews, that Jesus is the Christ. But they gainsaying and blaspheming, he shook his garments, and said to them: "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."<sup>137</sup>

Saint Peter did not hesitate in saying to the wicked:

But the countenance of the Lord (is) upon them that do evil things.<sup>138</sup>

But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For the time is, that judgment should begin at the house of God. And if (it begins) first at us, what shall be the end of them that believe not the gospel of God? And if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them also that suffer

---

<sup>135</sup> Acts 8:19-23.

<sup>136</sup> Acts 13:6-12.

<sup>137</sup> Acts 18:4-6.

<sup>138</sup> 1 Pet. 3:12.



according to the will of God, commend their souls in good deeds to the faithful Creator.<sup>139</sup>

Saint Jude wrote this awesome passage:

*I will therefore admonish you, though ye once knew all things, that Jesus, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, did afterwards destroy them that believed not: And the angels who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation, he hath reserved under darkness in everlasting chains, unto the judgment of the great day.*

*As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighboring cities, in like manner, having given themselves to fornication, and going after other flesh, were made an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire. In like manner these men also defile the flesh, and despise dominion, and blaspheme majesty.*

*When Michael the Archangel, disputing with the devil, contended about the body of Moses, he dares not bring against him the judgment of railing speech, but said: The Lord command thee. But these men blaspheme whatever things they know not: and what things soever they naturally know, like dumb beasts, in these they are corrupted. Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain: and after the error of Balaam they have for reward poured out themselves, and have perished in the contradiction of Core.*

*These are spots in their banquets, feasting together without fear, feeding themselves, clouds without water, which are carried about by winds, trees of the autumn, unfruitful, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own confusion; wandering stars, to whom the storm of darkness is reserved forever.*

*Now of these Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying: Behold, the Lord cometh with thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to reprove all the ungodly for all the works of their ungodliness, whereby they have done ungodly, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against God. These are murmurers, full of complaints, walking according to their own desires, and their mouth speaketh proud things, admiring persons for gain's sake.<sup>140</sup>*

*And the Holy Ghost praises a bishop because he is "blasphemed by them that say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."<sup>141</sup>*

The same terrible comparison with the devil is found also in this excerpt: "But to you I say, and to the rest who are at

---

<sup>139</sup> 1 Pet. 4:16-19.

<sup>140</sup> Jude 5-16.

<sup>141</sup> Apoc. 2:9.

*Thyatira: Whosoever have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say.*"<sup>142</sup>

### **Let Us Follow the Lesson of the Gospel without Restrictions**

So there you have grave, numerous and magnificent examples the New Testament gives us. Let us imitate them, therefore, as we imitate the adorable examples of sweetness, patience, kindness and meekness that our most clement Redeemer gave us.

To avoid any and all misunderstandings, once again we emphasize that this severe language should not become the only language of the apostle. On the contrary, we understand no apostolate is complete without the apostle being able to show the divine kindness of the Savior. But let us not be unilateral by ignoring, out of romanticism, convenience or lukewarmness, the lessons of admirable and invincible fortitude that Our Lord gave us. Like Him, let us strive to be equally humble and bold, peaceful and strong, meek and forceful, patient and severe. Let us not pick and choose among these virtues: perfection consists in imitating Our Lord in the plenitude of His adorable moral aspects.

For this end, we would now like to complete the thought expressed in an earlier chapter regarding the mentality of contemporary youth in the opinion of Cardinal Baudrillard, of happy memory: A thirst for heroism and sacrifice in today's young men leads them to seek exclusively strong ideas and demanding programs and to despise everything that could mean sentimental concession or capitulation to lower urges that relentlessly call us to a life adrift in the senses. May God be praised for this disposition, which can greatly contribute to the salvation of souls. But just as we warned against one-sided and erroneous conceptions of the Lord's mercy, we should remain alert to any exaggeration which, directly or indirectly, remotely or immediately might diminish in souls the notion of the central and most fundamental role that the law of kindness and love plays in the Religion of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

As a people, Brazilians have such a tendency to practice virtues that spring from kindness that their great danger is usually not found in lopsided tendencies toward cruelty and harshness but toward weakness, sentimentality and naiveté.

Exaggerations of virtue, because they are exaggerations, are defects that it behooves Catholic Action to fight and overcome. In this age of somber cruelty and implacable selfishness, it reflects

---

<sup>142</sup> Apoc. 2:23-24.

well on our people that this should be the defect we must fight. Let us fight it, however, for sentimentality and ingenuousness lead to spiritual and moral ruins that theology describes with somber colors. Let us not dwell only in the tender contemplation of our kindness, but let us try to develop it supernaturally in the direction the Church indicates, without exaggeration, deviation or derailment. A comparison will clarify our thought.

Holy Mother Church says that Saint Teresa of Jesus "*was admirable even in her errors.*" Nevertheless, had she lingered in the contemplation of golden sparks that existed in her errors and not fought them courageously, she would have never become the great Saint whom the whole of Christendom venerates and admires; the Saint Leibnitz said was "*a great man.*" Brazil only will be the country we ardently desire it to be, that is, one of the greatest countries of all time, if it does not stop in the contemplation of the golden reflexes that exist in the dominant traits of its mentality but rather cleanses it of the residue that prevents this gold from shining with greater strength and purity.

All this notwithstanding, let us never forget that nothing in the Catholic Religion, absolutely nothing, is done without love; and that therefore, the severity imposed by the demands of charity must itself be exercised with eyes fixed on the same limits that surround both.

Let us close the subject with words from Pius XI. They show us that this irradiation of love is what shall save the world:

*Our Predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, admiring the timely opportuneness of the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, said very aptly in his Encyclical Letter, "Annum Sacrum," "When in the days near her origin, the Church was oppressed under the yoke of the Caesars the Cross shown on high to the youthful Emperor was at once an omen and a cause of the victory that speedily followed. And here today another most auspicious and most divine sign is offered to our sight, to wit the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with a Cross set above it shining with most resplendent brightness in the midst of flames. Herein must all hopes be set, from hence must the salvation of men be sought and expected."*<sup>143</sup>

There is much talk about "*New age,*" "*new times,*" "*new order.*" Whether or not our adversaries like it, this "*new age*" will be the reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, under whose most gracious influence the world will find the only way to salvation.

Let us adore this Sacred Heart, on which Catholic iconography shows us the Cross of sacrifice, struggle, combat, austerity,

---

<sup>143</sup> Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, no. 2.

laying its roots in the most perfect of Hearts and illumined by  
purifying and dazzling flames of love.

## Conclusion

By developing the long enumeration of doctrines that were exposed here, we sought to emphasize the intimate link that connects them and turns them into one single ideological set. All of them are bound, closely or remotely, to the following principles: a denial of the effects of original sin; as a consequence, a conception of grace as the exclusive factor of the spiritual life; and a tendency to do without authority in the hope that order will result from a free, living and spontaneous conjugation of intellects and wills. The doctrine of the mandate, incidentally upheld by European authors many of whom are worthy of consideration for various reasons, found in our ambience a fertile ground where it bore fruits unforeseen by many of its authors, and other fruits they could not, perhaps, logically deduce from it.

Obviously, many people do not perceive the profound consequences implicit in the ideas they profess; others do not even profess these ideas in their totality, accepting only one or the other. However, the history of philosophy shows us that man, being naturally logical, never accepts an idea without experiencing the need to also accept the consequences that it entails. This work of ideological fructification is generally slow; but if we examine the deepest reasons for the great transformations that sometimes occur in a man we will often find them in this gradual ripening of conclusions, not even suspected in their remote beginnings.

Thus, persons who have accepted some of these ideas habitually support and applaud those who take a step forward in the same field, revealing a singular enthusiasm for those who reached the most radical ideological positions, and a real want of caution in their minds to notice the flagrant errors found in these positions. In other words, we are in the presence of an idea in progress, or rather of a current of men pursuing an idea, increasingly rooting themselves in it and becoming more and more intoxicated with its spirit.

If, as we said at the outset, our work can contribute to awaken the slumbering, warn the incautious against error and pull upright souls from its claws, it will have produced all the fruit we expect of it.

But—it could be said—if it is true that these errors exist, is it not also true that our book, concerned exclusively about refuting them, reveals a unilateral penchant for one order of truths while forgetting others?

Let us return once again to what we said in the Introduction.

Catholic doctrine is composed of harmonious and symmetrical truths, and the perfection of Catholic sense consists in the ability to embrace all of them in such a way that instead of compressing or diminishing one another, they are, on the contrary, harmonized in our minds as they are in the mind of the Church. So, these truths, like the sounds of a well-played melody, should come each one in its proper place, in the right order, and with the adequate sonority.

If this book were aimed at giving a panoramic idea of what Catholic Action should be, it certainly would be one-sided. But, as we have said, our intentions are more modest. We do not intend to play the whole melody but simply to emphasize certain notes that have not been played and to cancel others that disturb the harmony of the whole.

In a beautiful speech at the Metropolitan Curia, Msgr. Antonio de Castro Mayer, Vicar General and delegate to Catholic Action in São Paulo, narrated a meaningful episode:

During the pontificate of Pius XI, a certain Italian parish inaugurated a beautiful carillon in which each bell was named after an encyclical of that great Pontiff. The whole set constituted, thus, a representation of his doctrinal work. In that work, some bells did not please certain ears. We strive to defend them here, not because we believe they constitute the whole carillon, but because we know that without them the carillon would be irreparably flawed.

\* \* \*

The eventual contenders we may encounter can take various attitudes. Some will say that they do not quite think so, that we exaggerate and that our zeal has led us to see in dark colors what had been an innocuous reality. To these we ask that they tell us precisely what they think with the clarity of one who loves the truth and the exactitude of one who loves clarity, and that they warmly stand on our side to combat the ideas they do not profess. Others will certainly disagree with us in a clear way. All we ask of them is that they completely exteriorize their way of thinking, "*ut revelentur ex multis cordibus cogitationes.*"<sup>1</sup> This will be the greatest service they can render to the truth. Others, finally, will persevere in error but will try to change the formulas and, to a certain point, the doctrines; for error is necessarily a chameleon when it seeks to thrive in the shadow of the Church. But our words will have served at least as a warning to alert minds.

---

<sup>1</sup> "So that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:35 – NAB).

In any case, what we wish above all is that the most beloved Catholic Action may continue to fulfill the providential designs set for it by the Church, immaculate in her doctrine, unalloyed in her obedience, invincible in combat, and glorious in victory.

**Laus Deo Virginique Mariae**





# Appendices



## Appendix 1

### Catholic Action: Origin and Development of a Definition

(The classical definition of Catholic Action and its natural and marvelous development inspired His Eminence Cardinal Piazza of the Commission of Cardinals for Catholic Action to write an enlightening and substantial article that should always be kept in mind.)

#### 1. The Definition of Pius XI

The providential movement of Catholic Action, which has been taking aspects and forms more and more adapted to the demands of the times, undoubtedly owes its present condition, both theoretical and practical, to the pastoral genius of the mourned Supreme Pontiff Pius XI. While he did not have the merit of finding the name or starting the present movement of organized lay people, which appeared, as is known, during the Pontificate of Pius IX and continued to develop during the government of his successors Leo XIII, Pius X and Benedict XV, no one can dispute to Pius XI the merit of having given Catholic Action a clear and precise definition, upon which it was possible to construct a solid building capable of challenging the centuries.

Pius XI was chosen to govern the Church after important experiences had revealed in the lay movement of Catholic Action, along with considerable prerogatives and merits, also deficiencies (as usually happens with all things human). With his sagacious and deep intuition, Pius XI understood that to prevent the movement from going astray and secure its vitality it was necessary to integrate it into the organic life of the Church. In his first encyclical, *Ubi Arcano di Consilio*, which contains in germ all of his prodigious Pontificate and was published after long meditations, we find the basic lines of the definition of Catholic Action. A short time afterward he formulated it in memorable speeches, as follows: "**collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate.**" This definition, as the Pope himself implied, originated in a passage from Saint Paul that became famous precisely because of his brilliant interpretation: "**adjuva illas quae mecum laboraverunt in Evangelio.**"<sup>1</sup> Indeed, since evangelization "*in evangelio*" is the substance of the apostolate that Christ entrusted to the Apostles and their successors, that

---

<sup>1</sup> "Help those women who have labored with me in the Gospel" (Phil. 4, 3).

is, the hierarchy divinely established in the Church, so also the collaboration given this work by the laity "*quae mecum laboraverunt*" is the substance of Catholic Action. It is impossible to overlook the dogmatic depth and exactness of this definition.

## **2. Collaboration or Participation**

Wishing to emphasize the union that Catholic Action must have with the life and activity of the Church, Pius XI often liked to replace the word "*collaboration*" with "*participation*," a variation that well understood does not change the concept at all. This variation was possibly suggested to him by the marvelous text found in Saint Peter, which Pius XI quoted and applied already in his first encyclical:

*Tell your faithful children of the laity that when, united with their pastors and their bishops, they participate in the works of the apostolate, both individual and social, the end purpose of which is to make Jesus Christ better known and better loved, then they are more than ever "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people," of whom St. Peter spoke in such laudatory terms. (1 Peter 2:9)<sup>2</sup>*

It is obvious in this stupendous application that it does not mean a formal participation in the priesthood and apostolate, but a participation in the priestly and apostolic activity, the only one possible to simple Christians. And since this participation is supernatural in its substance and sublime in its ends, it greatly elevates the lay person, making him or her share in the halo and fruits of the apostolate.

## **3. In the First Encyclical of Pius XII**

We are now pleased to place side by side the first encyclical of Pius XI with the first and very recent one of the reigning Pontiff, Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus*, that devotes to Catholic Action a very encouraging page full of paternal kindness. In it he resorts to the already classical definition of laity formed by Catholic Action to acquire a profound awareness of their noble mission. In a splendid and descriptive definition, the Pontiff declares who those laymen are and what their mission is:

*A fervent phalanx of men and women, young men and maidens, obedient to the voice of the Supreme Pontiff and the directions*

---

<sup>2</sup> [Trans.: This is from Pius XI's Encyclical *Ubi Arcano dei Consilio* of Dec. 23, 1922.]

*of their Bishops, dedicate themselves with all the eagerness of their souls to the works of the apostolate, with the purpose of leading back to Christ the masses of people separated from Him.*

The Holy Father Pius XII obviously prefers the word collaboration, which is more easily understood and less exposed to erroneous amplifications; but he also accepts and confirms the profound interpretation of his Predecessor as he writes: *"This apostolic work performed according to the spirit of the Church, consecrates the lay person almost as a minister of Christ in the sense given by Saint Augustine."* And the Pontiff refers precisely to the Augustinian text, which appears to be a happy anticipation and omen of an activity that today has a name, a doctrine and is a consoling reality.

Pius XI affirmed that he defined Catholic Action as a participation or collaboration of the laymen in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church with a special inspiration from God. This testimony is so authoritative and solemn that it leaves no room for doubt. Incidentally, we know that the Pope enjoys, even outside the field of his infallibility, a special assistance from God in the government of the Church, to which Catholic Action is so intimately linked. Besides, events have fully confirmed the reality of that special inspiration from God.

#### **4. Precious Fruits of the Definition**

Indeed, a copious and select dogmatic literature sprang from the solid and profound terrain of the papal definition, for which the Pontiff himself provided the most insightful and brilliant basic elements. In the Sacred Scriptures were found most beautiful texts able to shed light on the various aspects of the movement of lay apostolate; its necessity and obligation; its admirable excellence; its origins found in the Gospel, in the Epistles of the Apostles and in Christian Tradition; its goals and characteristics; and finally, a blossoming of passages from Scripture that find in Catholic Action their legitimate, and at times so natural application that they appear to have been written just for it. For its part, by studying the movement and checking it against the various dogmas, Theology brought to light and emphasized outstanding and unsuspected harmonies.

The concept of hierarchical apostolate opened the way to the comparative study of Catholic Action as it relates with the divine constitution and organic life of the Church, whereas the concept of collaboration served as a guide to call to mind the great law of Christian solidarity that entails a communion of interests and

reciprocal action for the good of all and of each one in particular.

From there it went to the doctrine of the Mystical Body, taught by Saint Paul, and to the connected truths of common incorporation in Christ, supernatural life in Christ, and the consequent obligation of cooperating for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. In the two sacraments: Baptism, which performs the incorporation, and Confirmation, which expressly imposes collaboration and provides along with its title, the indispensable energies, were seen not only the sources of the royal priesthood but also the characteristics of their apostolate, to whose participation all laymen are called.

## **5. Hierarchy and Laity**

So it was that, by the force of circumstance, the study of relationships between Hierarchy and laity was deepened, and the means of collaboration needed for the times found. Catholic Action was thus built on a solid doctrinal foundation.

By nature and definition, Catholic Action is the activity of laity organized at the service of the Church; it is therefore not autonomous or independent. Collaboration necessarily requires the parties involved to share the same goals and agree on practical realizations. In our case it also requires subordination to the ecclesiastical Hierarchy. Be it because of the priestly dignity (which they lack) or because of the nature of apostolate, which by divine mission is reserved to the hierarchical priesthood, laymen cannot simply enter at will into the apostolic field.

It therefore behooves the hierarchy to determine the concrete goals and conditions of that collaboration according to the general or specific needs and possibilities of the various places. And the specific task of Catholic Action is to study the different work initiatives in the lay environment and act upon them as long as they have a seal of approval from the competent ecclesiastical authority. Only thus can collaboration be fruitful and guaranteed to be successful.

It is on the basis of this principle, and in this spirit that the masses of faithful were invited to do apostolate; and it must be said they understood the honor offered them with a call to sublime undertakings and responded with truly admirable generosity and readiness.

This success was certainly the best finding contained in the definition of Pius XI, which, by drawing Catholic Action closer to

Church activity, ennobled the work of the laity and elevated them to a quasi-priestly activity. This was precisely what the faithful understood, enlightened by the ecclesiastical assistants whom the hierarchy appointed and sent to represent it in the different associations like envoys of the Lord. And the excellent laymen of Catholic Action not only did not see their own activity hindered by the assistance of the priests, but drew from it immense encouragement and profit, both for their spiritual formation and the security of the apostolate. It was not without a reason that Pius XI, in his new and concise style applied to Catholic Action, regarding ecclesiastical assistants, uttered the meaningful phrase: "*in manibus tuis sortes meae.*"<sup>3</sup>

## **6. Knitting a Tighter Union Between Priesthood and Laity**

I am pleased to note that one of the most precious fruits of this condition for the program, that is, spiritual assistance by the clergy, was precisely to bring about a more intimate union between Catholic laity and clergy and above all with the Shepherds of the Church, feeding in their hearts a moving devotion and ever livelier attachment to the Supreme Pontiff, Vicar of Christ and visible head of the Universal Church; to the bishops, placed by the Holy Ghost to govern the individual Churches; and to the parish priests, placed by the bishops to lead a portion of their flock; in a word, to all those broadly referred to as the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, from top to bottom.

It is only natural for us to be the first to rejoice at these successes. In point of fact, there is not one bishop who has not touched with his own hands the edifying and truly providential work of Catholic Action both in the conduct of its members (all headed for a deep knowledge and fervent practice of Christian life) and in the abundant fruits of apostolic activity, destined to eradicate evil and foster the spiritual well being of families and society. Indeed, real transformations have taken place in certain parishes where Catholic Action helped priests in their ministry to plow, sow and harvest. Unanimous testimonies by bishops, pastors and above all the August Supreme Pontiffs undoubtedly constitute a magnificent apology for Catholic Action.

Everyone knows what the unforgettable Pius XI thought of Catholic Action, to which he referred in all of his speeches and in all his documents, even solemn ones, always with new reflections on the central thought of its definition, most timely

---

<sup>3</sup> "My lots are in thy hands" (Ps. 30:16).

and thrilling suggestions, and warm and moving calls and exhortations.

## **7. At the Present Time**

In turn, the recent encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, made known to the world, in the most eloquent way, what the present Pontiff Pius XII thinks of Catholic Action. In this encyclical the Pope testifies that, amidst the sufferings and worries of the present time, he finds precisely in Catholic Action, which has already penetrated the world over, an intimate consolation and a heavenly joy, for which he thanks God every day, humbly and profoundly. He affirms, moreover, that from Catholic Action emanate sources of grace and reserves of strength whose value would be difficult to appreciate enough in the times we are in. He also says the Church prayer addressed to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his vineyard, has been heeded according to the needs of the present time, successfully supplementing and completing the often hindered or insufficient strivings of the priestly apostolate. And he finally concludes with these outstanding words:

*This collaboration of the laity with the priesthood in all classes, categories and groups reveals precious industry and to the laity is entrusted a mission than which noble and loyal hearts could desire none higher nor more consoling.*<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the voice, paternal heartbeats and elevated thoughts of the mourned, great Pontiff of Catholic Action, resonate in Pius XII.

## **8. The Commission of Cardinals in Italy**

The measures, obviously inspired by esteem and affection for Catholic Action, which Pius XII took right after his election can be better appreciated now in light of the august expressions of the encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, which for many might have been surprising. I am referring to the institution and appointment of the Commission of Cardinals for the high direction of the Italian Catholic Action.

Because of the vast amount and wide scope of the work that weighs over his supreme and universal ministry, and above all in view of the great development of Catholic Action in Italy, instead of reserving personally for himself the high direction, as for

---

<sup>4</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, no. 89, at [www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12SUMMI.HTM](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12SUMMI.HTM)



obvious reasons his venerable predecessor had done, Pius XII decided to entrust that honorable post to the aforementioned Commission, thus following a traditional norm in Church government by applying in Italy what had already been done in other countries. This is an unequivocal proof of his high and paternal interest and even seems to indicate a certain orientation that should take the definition we have just talked about to its ultimate developments. To form the Cardinals Commission he summoned residential bishops, that is, bishops presently engaged in the exercise of the hierarchical apostolate; this seems to indicate that the need for dependence of Catholic Action on the sacred hierarchy must be emphasized even more.

### **9. The Ecclesiastical Assistants**

Besides, there are previous cases. So it is certain that, by the natural flow of things, the activity of the ecclesiastical assistants inside Catholic Action associations slowly gained importance. Rumor has it that in many dioceses it seemed advisable to appoint a priest to preside over the Diocesan Council, so he will be the interpreter and safest executor of the bishop's norms. The sad episode of 1931 was not forgotten either, which brought as a consequence the mutual understandings between the Holy See and the Italian Government, which could be well called a supplement to the Concordat in regard to Catholic Action. In those conventions we read the premise that everyone knows:

*The Italian Catholic Action is essentially diocesan and depends directly on the bishops, who elect their ecclesiastical and lay leaders. It is clear that they depend directly, but not exclusively, on the bishops, who in their own ordinary ministry are subordinated to the supreme authority of the Vicar of Christ.*

On that same occasion the famous saying of a Father of the Church was called to mind: "*Nihil sine episcopo*;"<sup>5</sup> to what it could be added with due proportion and limitation, this other one: "*Nihil sine parochio*."<sup>6</sup> The first action of Pius XII leads Catholic Action resolutely in this sense.

In order to be able to fulfill the mandate received from the Supreme Pontiff, the Cardinals Commission needed a central entity to receive and transmit its directives. For this purpose the Central Office of Catholic Action was created, naturally presided over by the Secretary of the aforementioned Commission. In this

---

<sup>5</sup> "Nothing without the bishop."

<sup>6</sup> "Nothing without the parish priest."

way, under the high direction of the Commission, a central direction was established, with its corresponding leaderships in dioceses and parishes. Accordingly, diocesan and parish offices were formed within the framework of the hierarchy's degrees: the bishop, divinely invested with ordinary authority, and the pastor, "*cui paroecia collata est in titulum cum cura animarum sub Ordinari loci autoritate exercenda.*"<sup>7</sup> The apostolate of the laity could not be more solidly inserted in the life and organization of the Church.

## 10. Substantial Continuity of Catholic Action

All this notwithstanding, there was no substantial change in the aims and structure of Catholic Action, whose internal organization and statutes remained intact except for a few small changes that the Commission may introduce. Hence it will continue to function as before, in its different categories, naturally under the direction of the competent and corresponding ecclesiastical authority. Only the diocesan boards which previously had only the function of watching and coordinating, were absorbed by the Offices, whose charge is broader and whose decisions are more effective since they come from the jurisdictional authority.

Obviously, just as the Associations should stick to the realm of action properly speaking, that is, to carrying out the work plans approved by the Offices, so also the latter cannot and should not stray from directive functions by seeking to replace the presidencies or Councils of the various Associations, with which they nevertheless remain linked by means of the Consultation, a complementary agency that renders the Offices great services by communicating to them the fruits of studies and experiences made in the field of apostolate.

Official communiqués by the Cardinals Commission and the General Secretary have already determined in its main lines the jurisdiction and relationships of the new presiding commissions, which will be set in greater detail in the statutes. Suffice it for the time being to indicate the guiding spirit of these innovations, destined to promote a greater union of the organizations with the hierarchy, which will be of great advantage for Catholic Action, and to emphasize the cultural hierarchical subordination of the various Offices, which should know and realize the limits of their attributions.

---

<sup>7</sup> Bouscaren, Can. 451 §1. [Trans.: The Latin text of this paragraph defines "*pastor.*" It reads: "*a priest or moral person upon whom a parish is conferred in his own right with the care of souls to be exercised under the authority of the Ordinary of the place.*"]

If the bishops are obliged to observe and enforce in their own dioceses the statutes and general norms of the Cardinals Commission that acts in the Holy Father's name and almost represents him, with all the more reason will parish priests be obliged to this in relation to their bishop, from whom they receive at the moment a mandate to act, in this case, as they please. So there is reason for the existence of a superior Office that will rapidly apply any remedy when necessary.

We are reserving for another article some considerations about the advantages sought by and foreseen in the new dispositions; but we do not want to conclude without first lifting our thoughts to God, to thank Him wholeheartedly for having inspired in Pius XI a definition from which the Church has so benefited during his glorious Pontificate; and also for having inspired in Pius XII the idea of consolidating the same definition in a more authoritative and cogent fashion, thus steering Italian Catholic Action toward new goals and conquests, under the auspices of this new Pontificate filled with hopeful and reassuring promises.

Adeodato G. Cardinal Piazza  
Patriarch of Venice  
Member of the Cardinals Commission  
for Italian Catholic Action



## Appendix 2

### **Apostolic Letter *Notre Charge Apostolique* <sup>1</sup>**

**(to the French Episcopate, on The Sillon)**

**Pope Pius X**

**(August 25, 1910)**

Our Apostolic Mandate requires from Us that We watch over the purity of the Faith and the integrity of Catholic discipline. It requires from Us that We protect the faithful from evil and error; especially so when evil and error are presented in dynamic language which, concealing vague notions and ambiguous expressions with emotional and high-sounding words, is likely to set ablaze the hearts of men in pursuit of ideals which, whilst attractive, are none the less nefarious. Such were not so long ago the doctrines of the so-called philosophers of the 18th century, the doctrines of the Revolution and Liberalism which have been so often condemned; such are even today the theories of the Sillon which, under the glowing appearance of generosity, are all too often wanting in clarity, logic and truth. These theories do not belong to the Catholic or, for that matter, to the French Spirit.

#### **The Sillon Did Have Considerable Qualities**

We have long debated, Venerable Brethren, before We decided to solemnly and publicly speak Our mind on the Sillon. Only when your concern augmented Our own did We decide to do so. For We love, indeed, the valiant young people who fight under the Sillon's banner, and We deem them worthy of praise and admiration in many respects. We love their leaders, whom We are pleased to acknowledge as noble souls on a level above vulgar passions, and inspired with the noblest form of enthusiasm in their quest for goodness. You have seen, Venerable Brethren, how, imbued with a living realization of the brotherhood of men, and supported in their selfless efforts by their love of Jesus Christ and a strict observance of their religious duties, they sought out those who labor and suffer in order to set them on their feet again.

This was shortly after Our Predecessor Leo XIII of happy memory had issued his remarkable Encyclical on the condition of the working class. Speaking through her supreme leader, the Church had just poured out of the tenderness of her motherly love over the humble and the lowly, and it looked as though she was calling out for an ever growing number of people to labor for the restoration of order and justice in our uneasy society. Was it not opportune, then, for the leaders of the Sillon to come forward and place at the service of the Church their troops of young believers who could fulfill her wishes and her hopes? And, in fact, the Sillon did raise among the

---

<sup>1</sup> (Trans.: Subtitles and emphases throughout this Appendix are by Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira.)

workers the standard of Jesus Christ, the symbol of salvation for peoples and nations. Nourishing its social action at the fountain of divine grace, it did impose a respect for religion upon the least willing groups, accustoming the ignorant and the impious to hearing the Word of God. And, not seldom, during public debates, stung by a question, or sarcasm, you saw them jumping to their feet and proudly proclaiming their faith in the face of a hostile audience. This was the heyday of the Sillon; its brighter side accounts for the encouragement, and tokens of approval, which the bishops and the Holy See gave liberally when this religious fervor was still obscuring the true nature of the Sillonist movement.

### **But the Gravity of Its Defects Was Even Greater**

For it must be said, Venerable Brethren, that our expectations have been frustrated in large measure. The day came when perceptive observers could discern alarming trends within the Sillon; the Sillon was losing its way. Could it have been otherwise? Its leaders were young, full of enthusiasm and self-confidence. But they were not adequately equipped with historical knowledge, sound philosophy, and solid theology to tackle without danger the difficult social problems in which their work and their inclinations were involving them. They were not sufficiently equipped to be on their guard against the penetration of liberal and Protestant concepts on doctrine and obedience.

### **That Forced the Pope to Condemn It**

They were given no small measure of advice. Admonition came after the advice but, to Our sorrow, both advice and reproaches ran off the sheath of their elusive souls, and were of no avail. Things came to such a pass that We should be failing in Our duty if kept silence any longer. We owe the truth to Our dear sons of the Sillon who are carried away by their generous ardor along the path strewn with errors and dangers. We owe the truth to a large number of seminarians and priests who have been drawn away by the Sillon, if not from the authority, at least from the guidance and influence of the bishops. We owe it also to the Church in which the Sillon is sowing discord and whose interests it endangers.

### **The Sillon Tries to Dodge Church Authority**

In the first place We must take up sharply the pretension of the Sillon to escape the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical authority. Indeed, the leaders of the Sillon claim that they are working in a field which is not that of the Church; they claim that they are pursuing aims in the temporal order only and not those of the spiritual order; that the Sillonist is simply a Catholic devoted to the betterment of the working class and to democratic endeavors by drawing from the practice of his faith the energy for his selfless efforts. They claim that, neither more nor less than a Catholic craftsman, farmer, economist or politician, the Sillonist is subject to common standards of behavior, yet without being bound in a special manner by the authority of the Church. To reply to these fallacies is only too easy; for whom will they make believe that the Catholic Sillonists, the priests and seminarians enrolled in their ranks have in sight in their social work, only the temporal interests of the working class? To maintain this, We think, would be an insult to them. The truth is that the Sillonist leaders are self-confessed and irrepressible idealists; they claim to regenerate the working class by first elevating the conscience of Man; they have a social doctrine, and they have

religious and philosophical principles for the reconstruction of society upon new foundations; they have a particular conception of human dignity, freedom, justice and brotherhood; and, in an attempt to justify their social dreams, they put forward the Gospel, but interpreted in their own way; and what is even more serious, they call to witness Christ, but a diminished and distorted Christ. Further, they teach these ideas in their study groups, and inculcate them upon their friends, and they also introduce them into their working procedures. Therefore they are really professors of social, civic, and religious morals; and whatever modifications they may introduce in the organization of the Sillonist movement, we have the right to say that the aims of the Sillon, its character and its action belong to the field of morals which is the proper domain of the Church. In view of all this, the Sillonists are deceiving themselves when they believe that they are working in a field that lies outside the limits of Church authority and of its doctrinal and directive power.

Even if their doctrines were free from errors, it would still be a very serious breach of Catholic discipline to decline obstinately the direction of those who have received from heaven the mission to guide individuals and communities along the straight path of truth and goodness. But, as we have already said, the evil lies far deeper; the Sillon, carried away by an ill-conceived love for the weak, has fallen into error.

### **The Sillon's Egalitarian Tendencies Are Erroneous**

Indeed, the Sillon proposes to raise up and reeducate the working class. But in this respect the principles of Catholic doctrine have been defined, and the history of Christian civilization bears witness to their beneficent fruitfulness. Our Predecessor of happy memory reaffirmed them in masterly documents, and all Catholics dealing with social questions have the duty to study them and to keep them in mind. He taught, among other things, that "Christian Democracy must preserve the diversity of classes which is assuredly the attribute of a soundly constituted State, and it must seek to give human society the form and character which God, its Author, has imparted to it." Our Predecessor denounced "A certain Democracy which goes so far in wickedness as to place sovereignty in the people and aims at the suppression of classes and their leveling down." At the same time, Leo XIII laid down for Catholics a program of action, the only program capable of putting society back onto its centuries-old Christian basis. But what have the leaders of the Sillon done? Not only have they adopted a program and teaching different from that of Leo XIII (which would be of itself a singularly audacious decision on the part of laymen thus taking up, concurrent with the Sovereign Pontiff, the role of director of social action in the Church); but they have openly rejected the program laid out by Leo XIII, and have adopted another which is diametrically opposed to it. Further, they reject the doctrine recalled by Leo XIII on the essential principles of society; they place authority in the people, or gradually suppress it and strive, as their ideal, to effect the leveling down of the classes. In opposition to Catholic doctrine, therefore, they are proceeding towards a condemned ideal.

### **Expounding the Sillon's Subversive and Revolutionary Doctrines**

We know well that they flatter themselves with the idea of raising human dignity and the discredited condition of the working class. We know that they wish to render just and perfect the labor laws and the relations between employers and employees, thus causing a more complete justice and a greater measure of charity to prevail upon earth, and causing also a profound and

fruitful transformation in society by which mankind would make an undreamed-of progress. Certainly, We do not blame these efforts; they would be excellent in every respect if the Sillonist did not forget that a person's progress consists in developing his natural abilities by fresh motivations; that it consists also in permitting these motivations to operate within the frame of, and in conformity with, the laws of human nature. But, on the contrary, by ignoring the laws governing human nature and by breaking the bounds within which they operate, the human person is led, not toward progress, but towards death. This, nevertheless, is what they want to do with human society; they dream of changing its natural and traditional foundations; they dream of a Future City built on different principles, and they dare to proclaim these more fruitful and more beneficial than the principles upon which the present Christian City rests.

No, Venerable Brethren, We must repeat with the utmost energy in these times of social and intellectual anarchy when everyone takes it upon himself to teach as a teacher and lawmaker—the City cannot be built otherwise than as God has built it; society cannot be setup unless the Church lays the foundations and supervises the work; no, civilization is not something yet to be found, nor is the New City to be built on hazy notions; it has been in existence and still is: it is Christian civilization, it is the Catholic City. It has only to be set up and restored continually against the unremitting attacks of insane dreamers, rebels and miscreants. *Omnia instaurare in Christo.*

Now, lest We be accused of judging too hastily and with unjustified rigor the social doctrines of the Sillon, We wish to examine their essential points.

The Sillon has a praise-worthy concern for human dignity, but it understands human dignity in the manner of some philosophers, of whom the Church does not at all feel proud. The first condition of that dignity is liberty, but viewed in the sense that, except in religious matters, each man is autonomous. This is the basic principle from which the Sillon draws further conclusions: today the people are in tutelage under an authority distinct from themselves; they must liberate themselves: **political emancipation**. They are also dependent upon employers who own the means of production, exploit, oppress and degrade the workers; they must shake off the yoke: **economic emancipation**. Finally, they are ruled by a so-called leading caste, whose intellectual development assures a preponderance in the direction of affairs; they must break away from this dominion: **intellectual emancipation**. The leveling-down of differences from this three-fold point of view will bring about equality among men, and such equality is viewed as true human justice. A sociopolitical setup resting on these two pillars of Liberty and Equality (to which Fraternity will presently be added), is what they call Democracy.

However, liberty and equality are, so to speak, no more than a negative side. The distinctive and positive aspect of Democracy is to be found in the largest possible participation of everyone in the government of public affairs. And this, in turn, comprises a three-fold aspect, namely political, economical, and moral.

At first, the Sillon does not wish to abolish political authority; on the contrary, it considers it necessary; but it wishes to divide it, or rather to multiply it in such a way that each citizen will become a kind of king. Authority, so they concede, comes from God, but it resides primarily in the people and expresses itself by means of elections or, better still, by selection. However, it still



remains in the hands of the people; it does not escape their control. It will be an external authority, yet only in appearance; in fact, it will be internal because it will be an authority assented to.

All other things being equal, the same principle will apply to economics. Taken away from a specific group, management will be so well multiplied that each worker will himself become a kind of employer. The system by which the Sillon intends to actualize this economic ideal is not Sillonism, they say; it is a system of guilds in a number large enough to induce a healthy competition and to protect the workers' independence; in this manner, they will not be bound to any guild in particular.

We come now to the principal aspect, the moral aspect. Since, as we have seen, authority is much reduced, another force is necessary to supplement it and to provide a permanent counterweight against individual selfishness. This new principle, this force, is the love of professional interest and of public interest, that is to say, the love of the very end of the profession and of society. Visualize a society in which, in the soul of everyone, along with the innate love of personal interest and family welfare, prevails love for one's occupation and for the welfare of the community. Imagine this society in which, in the conscience of everyone, personal and family interests are so subordinate that a superior interest always takes precedence over them. Could not such a society almost do without any authority? And would it not be the embodiment of the ideal of human dignity, with each citizen having the soul of a king, and each worker the soul of a master? Snatched away from the pettiness of private interests, and raised up to the interests of the profession and, even higher, to those of the whole nation and, higher still, to those of the whole human race (for the Sillon's field of vision is not bound by the national borders, it encompasses all men even to the ends of the earth), the human heart, enlarged by the love of the commonwealth, would embrace all comrades of the same profession, all compatriots, all men. Such is the ideal of human greatness and nobility to be attained through the famous popular trilogy: LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

These three elements, namely political, economic, and moral, are interdependent and, as we have said, the moral element is dominant. Indeed, no political Democracy can survive if it is not anchored to an economic Democracy. But neither one nor the other is possible if it is not rooted in awareness by the human conscience of being invested with moral responsibilities and energies mutually commensurate. But granted the existence of that awareness, so created by conscious responsibilities and moral forces, the kind of Democracy arising from it will naturally reflect in deeds the consciousness and moral forces from which it flows. In the same manner, political Democracy will also issue from the tradeguild system. Thus, both political and economic Democracies, the latter bearing the former, will be fastened in the very consciousness of the people to unshakable bases.

To sum up, such is the theory, one could say the dream of the Sillon; and that is what its teaching aims at, what it calls the democratic education of the people, that is, raising to its maximum the conscience and civic responsibility of every one, from which will result economic and political Democracy and the reign of JUSTICE, LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

This brief explanation, Venerable Brethren, will show you clearly how much reason We have to say that the Sillon opposes doctrine to doctrine, that it seeks to build its City on a theory contrary to Catholic truth, and that falsifies the basic and essential notions which regulate social relations in any human society. The following considerations will make this opposition even more evident.

## Refutation

The Sillon places public authority primarily in the people, from whom it then flows into the government in such a manner, however, that it continues to reside in the people. But Leo XIII absolutely condemned this doctrine in his Encyclical *Diuturnum Illud* on political government in which he said:

"Modern writers in great numbers, following in the footsteps of those who called themselves philosophers in the last century, declare that all power comes from the people; consequently those who exercise power in society do not exercise it from their own authority, but from an authority delegated to them by the people and on the condition that it can be revoked by the will of the people from whom they hold it. Quite contrary is the sentiment of Catholics who hold that the right of government derives from God as its natural and necessary principle."

Admittedly, the Sillon holds that authority—which it first places in the people—descends from God, but in such a way: "as to return from below upwards, whilst in the organization of the Church, power descends from above downwards."

But besides its being abnormal for the delegation of power to ascend, since it is in its nature to descend, Leo XIII refuted in advance this attempt to reconcile Catholic Doctrine with the error of philosophism. For, he continues: "It is necessary to remark here that those who preside over the government of public affairs may indeed, in certain cases, be chosen by the will and judgment of the multitude without repugnance or opposition to Catholic doctrine. But whilst this choice marks out the ruler, it does not confer upon him the authority to govern; it does not delegate the power, it designates the person who will be invested with it."

For the rest, if the people remain the holders of power, what becomes of authority? A shadow, a myth; there is no more law properly so-called, no more obedience. The Sillon acknowledges this: indeed, since it demands that threefold political, economic, and intellectual emancipation in the name of human dignity, the Future City in the formation of which it is engaged will have no masters and no servants. All citizens will be free; all comrades, all kings. A command, a precept would be viewed as an attack upon their freedom; subordination to any form of superiority would be a diminishment of the human person, and obedience a disgrace. Is it in this manner, Venerable Brethren, that the traditional doctrine of the Church represents social relations, even in the most perfect society? Has not every community of people, dependent and unequal by nature, need of an authority to direct their activity towards the common good and to enforce its

laws? And if perverse individuals are to be found in a community (and there always are), should not authority be all the stronger as the selfishness of the wicked is more threatening? Further,—unless one greatly deceives oneself in the conception of liberty—can it be said with an atom of reason that authority and liberty are incompatible? Can one teach that obedience is contrary to human dignity and that the ideal would be to replace it by "accepted authority"? Did not St. Paul the Apostle foresee human society in all its possible stages of development when he bade the faithful to be subject to every authority? Does obedience to men as the legitimate representatives of God, that is to say in the final analysis, obedience to God, degrade Man and reduce him to a level unworthy of himself? Is the religious life which is based on obedience, contrary to the ideal of human nature? Were the Saints—the most obedient men, just slaves and degenerates? Finally, can you imagine social conditions in which Jesus Christ, if He returned to earth, would not give an example of obedience and, further, would no longer say: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's"?

Teaching such doctrines, and applying them to its internal organization, the Sillon, therefore, sows erroneous and fatal notions on authority, liberty and obedience, among your Catholic youth. The same is true of justice and equality; the Sillon says that it is striving to establish an era of equality which, by that very fact, would be also an era of greater justice. Thus, to the Sillon, every inequality of condition is an injustice, or at least, a diminution of justice? Here we have a principle that conflicts sharply with the nature of things, a principle conducive to jealousy, injustice, and subversive to any social order. Thus, Democracy alone will bring about the reign of perfect justice! Is this not an insult to other forms of government which are thereby debased to the level of sterile makeshifts? Besides, the Sillonists once again clash on this point with the teaching of Leo XIII. In the Encyclical on political government which We have already quoted, they could have read this: "Justice being preserved, it is not forbidden to the people to choose for themselves the form of government which best corresponds with their character or with the institutions and customs handed down by their forefathers."

And the Encyclical alludes to the three well-known forms of government, thus implying that justice is compatible with any of them. And does not the Encyclical on the condition of the working class state clearly that justice can be restored within the existing social setup—since it indicates the means of doing so? Undoubtedly, Leo XIII did not mean to speak of some form of justice, but of perfect justice. Therefore, when he said that justice could be found in any of the three aforesaid forms of government, he was teaching that in this respect Democracy does not enjoy a special privilege. The Sillonists who maintain the opposite view, either turn a deaf ear to the teaching of the Church or form for themselves an idea of justice and equality which is not Catholic.

The same applies to the notion of Fraternity which they found on the love of common interest or, beyond all philosophies and religions, on the mere notion of humanity, thus embracing with an equal love and tolerance all human beings and their miseries, whether these are intellectual, moral, or physical and temporal. But Catholic doctrine tells us that the primary duty of charity does not lie in the toleration of false ideas, however sincere they may be, nor in the theoretical or practical indifference towards the errors and vices in which we see our brethren plunged, but in the zeal for their intellectual and moral improvement as well as for their material wellbeing. Catholic doctrine further tells us that love for our neighbor flows from our love for God, Who is Father to all, and goal of the whole human family; and in Jesus Christ whose members we are, to the point

that in doing good to others we are doing good to Jesus Christ Himself. Any other kind of love is sheer illusion, sterile and fleeting.

Indeed, we have the human experience of pagan and secular societies of ages past to show that concern for common interests or affinities of nature weigh very little against the passions and wild desires of the heart. No, Venerable Brethren, there is no genuine fraternity outside Christian charity. Through the love of God and His Son Jesus Christ Our Savior, Christian charity embraces all men, comforts all, and leads all to the same faith and same heavenly happiness.

By separating fraternity from Christian charity thus understood, Democracy, far from being a progress, would mean a disastrous step backwards for civilization. If, as We desire with all Our heart, the highest possible peak of wellbeing for society and its members is to be attained through fraternity or, as it is also called, universal solidarity, all minds must be united in the knowledge of Truth, all wills united in morality, and all hearts in the love of God and His Son Jesus Christ. But this union is attainable only by Catholic charity, and that is why Catholic charity alone can lead the people in the march of progress towards the ideal civilization.

Finally, at the root of all their fallacies on social questions, lie the false hopes of Sillonists on human dignity. According to them, Man will be a man truly worthy of the name only when he has acquired a strong, enlightened, and independent consciousness, able to do without a master, obeying only himself, and able to assume the most demanding responsibilities without faltering. Such are the big words by which human pride is exalted, like a dream carrying Man away without light, without guidance, and without help into the realm of illusion in which he will be destroyed by his errors and passions whilst awaiting the glorious day of his full consciousness. And that great day, when will it come? Unless human nature can be changed, which is not within the power of the Sillonists, will that day ever come? Did the Saints, who brought human dignity to its highest point, possess that kind of dignity? And what of the lowly of this earth who are unable to raise so high but are content to plow their furrow modestly at the level where Providence placed them? They who are diligently discharging their duties with Christian humility, obedience, and patience, are they not also worthy of being called men? Will not Our Lord take them one day out of their obscurity and place them in heaven amongst the princes of His people?

We close here Our observations on the errors of the Sillon. We do not claim to have exhausted the subject, for We should yet draw your attention to other points that are equally false and dangerous, for example on the manner to interpret the concept of the coercive power of the Church. But We must now examine the influence of these errors upon the practical conduct and upon the social action of the Sillon.

### **The Egalitarian Structure of The Sillon's Organization**

The Sillonist doctrines are not kept within the domain of abstract philosophy; they are taught to Catholic youth and, even worse, efforts are made to apply them in **everyday life**. The Sillon is regarded as the nucleus of the Future City and, accordingly, it is being made to its image as much as possible. Indeed, the Sillon has no hierarchy. The governing elite has emerged from the rank and file by selection, that is, by imposing itself through its moral authority and its virtues. People join it freely, and freely they may leave it. Studies are carried out without a master, at the

very most, with an adviser. The study groups are really intellectual pools in which each member is at once both master and student. The most complete fellowship prevails amongst its members, and draws their souls into close communion: hence the common soul of the Sillon. It has been called a "friendship". Even the priest, on entering, lowers the eminent dignity of his priesthood and, by a strange reversal of roles, becomes a student, placing himself on a level with his young friends, and is no more than a comrade.

### **The Anarchical Spirit It Instills**

In these democratic practices and in the theories of the Ideal City from which they flow, you will recognize, Venerable Brethren, the hidden cause of the lack of discipline with which you have so often had to reproach the Sillon. It is not surprising that you do not find among the leaders and their comrades trained on these lines, whether seminarians or priests, the respect, the docility, and the obedience which are due to your authority and to yourselves; nor is it surprising that you should be conscious of an underlying opposition on their part, and that, to your sorrow, you should see them withdraw altogether from works which are not those of the Sillon or, if compelled under obedience, that they should comply with distaste. You are the past; they are the pioneers of the civilization of the future. You represent the hierarchy, social inequalities, authority, and obedience—worn out institutions to which their hearts, captured by another ideal, can no longer submit to. Occurrences so sad as to bring tears to Our eyes bear witness to this frame of mind. And we cannot, with all Our patience, overcome a just feeling of indignation. Now then! Distrust of the Church, their Mother, is being instilled into the minds of Catholic youth; they are being taught that after nineteen centuries She has not yet been able to build up in this world a society on true foundations; She has not understood the social notions of authority, liberty, equality, fraternity and human dignity; they are told that the great Bishops and Kings, who have made France what it is and governed it so gloriously, have not been able to give their people true justice and true happiness because they did not possess the Sillonist Ideal!

The breath of the Revolution has passed this way, and We can conclude that, whilst the social doctrines of the Sillon are erroneous, its spirit is dangerous and its education disastrous.

### **The Sillon Has a Hateful Intolerance**

But then, what are we to think of its action in the Church? What are we to think of a movement so punctilious in its brand of Catholicism that, unless you embrace its cause, you would almost be regarded as an internal enemy of the Church, and you would understand nothing of the Gospel and of Jesus Christ! We deem it necessary to insist on that point because it is precisely its Catholic ardor which has secured for the Sillon until quite recently, valuable encouragement and the support of distinguished persons. Well now! Judging the words and the deeds, We feel compelled to say that in its actions as well as in its doctrine, the Sillon does not give satisfaction to the Church.

In the first place, its brand of Catholicism accepts only the democratic form of government which it considers the most favorable to the Church and, so to speak, identifies it with her. The Sillon, therefore, subjects its religion to a political party. We do not have to demonstrate here that

the advent of universal Democracy is of no concern to the action of the Church in the world; we have already recalled that the Church has always left to the nations the care of giving themselves the form of government which they think most suited to their needs. What We wish to affirm once again, after Our Predecessor, is that it is an error and a danger to bind down Catholicism by principle to a particular form of government. This error and this danger are all the greater when Religion is associated with a kind of Democracy whose doctrines are false. But this is what the Sillon is doing. For the sake of a particular political form, it compromises the Church, it sows division among Catholics, snatches away young people and even priests and seminarians from purely Catholic action, and is wasting away as a dead loss part of the living forces of the nation.

### **Except When It Comes to Church Principles**

And, behold, Venerable Brethren, an astounding contradiction: It is precisely because religion ought to transcend all parties, and it is in appealing to this principle, that the Sillon abstains from defending the beleaguered Church. Certainly, it is not the Church that has gone into the political arena: they have dragged her there to mutilate and to despoil her. Is it not the duty of every Catholic, then, to use the political weapons which he holds, to defend her? Is it not a duty to confine politics to its own domain and to leave the Church alone except in order to give her that which is her due? Well, at the sight of the violences thus done to the Church, we are often grieved to see the Sillonists folding their arms except when it is to their advantage to defend her; we see them dictate or maintain a program which nowhere and in no degree can be called Catholic. Yet this does not prevent the same men, when fully engaged in political strife and spurred by provocation, from publicly proclaiming their faith. What are we to say except that there are two different men in the Sillonist; the individual, who is Catholic, and the Sillonist, the man of action, who is neutral!

### **One of Sillon's Grave Errors Is Interconfessionalism**

There was a time when the Sillon, as such, was truly Catholic. It recognized but one moral force—Catholicism; and the Sillonists were wont to proclaim that Democracy would have to be Catholic or would not exist at all. A time came when they changed their minds. They left to each one his religion or his philosophy. They ceased to call themselves Catholics and, for the formula "Democracy will be Catholic" they substituted "Democracy will not be anti-Catholic", any more than it will be anti-Jewish or anti-Buddhist. This was the time of "the Greater Sillon". For the construction of the Future City they appealed to the workers of all religions and all sects. These were asked but one thing: to share the same social ideal, to respect all creeds, and to bring with them a certain supply of moral force. Admittedly, they declared that, "The leaders of the Sillon place their religious faith above everything. But can they deny others the right to draw their moral energy from whence they can? In return, they expect others to respect their right to draw their own moral energy from the Catholic Faith. Accordingly they ask all those who want to change today's society in the direction of Democracy, not to oppose each other on account of the philosophical or religious convictions which may separate them, but to march hand in hand, not renouncing their convictions, but trying to provide on the ground of practical realities, the proof of the excellence of their personal convictions. Perhaps a union will be effected on this ground of emulation between souls holding different religious or philosophical convictions." And they added at the same time (but how could this be accomplished?) that "the Little Catholic Sillon will be the soul of the Greater Cosmopolitan Sillon."

Recently, the term "Greater Sillon" was discarded and a new organization was born without modifying, quite the contrary, the spirit and the substratum of things: "In order to organize in an orderly manner the different forces of activity, the Sillon still remains as a Soul, a Spirit, which will pervade the groups and inspire their work." Thus, a host of new groups, Catholic, Protestant, Free-Thinking, now apparently autonomous, are invited to set to work: "Catholic comrades will work between themselves in a special organization and will learn and educate themselves. Protestant and Free-Thinking Democrats will do likewise on their own side. But all of us, Catholics, Protestants and Free-Thinkers will have at heart to arm young people, not in view of the fratricidal struggle, but in view of a disinterested emulation in the field of social and civic virtues."

These declarations and this new organization of the Sillonist action call for very serious remarks.

Here we have, founded by Catholics, an inter-denominational association that is to work for the reform of civilization, an undertaking which is above all religious in character; for there is no true civilization without a moral civilization, and no true moral civilization without the true religion: it is a proven truth, a historical fact. The new Sillonists cannot pretend that they are merely working on "the ground of practical realities" where differences of belief do not matter. Their leader is so conscious of the influence, which the convictions of the mind have upon the result of the action, that he invites them, whatever religion they may belong to, "to provide on the ground of practical realities, the proof of the excellence of their personal convictions." And with good reason: indeed, all practical results reflect the nature of one's religious convictions, just as the limbs of a man down to his fingertips, owe their very shape to the principle of life that dwells in his body.

This being said, what must be thought of the promiscuity in which young Catholics will be caught up with heterodox and unbelieving folk in a work of this nature? Is it not a thousandfold more dangerous for them than a neutral association? What are we to think of this appeal to all the heterodox, and to all the unbelievers, to prove the excellence of their convictions in the social sphere in a sort of apologetic contest? Has not this contest lasted for nineteen centuries in conditions less dangerous for the faith of Catholics? And was it not all to the credit of the Catholic Church? What are we to think of this respect for all errors, and of this strange invitation made by a Catholic to all the dissidents to strengthen their convictions through study so that they may have more and more abundant sources of fresh forces? What are we to think of an association in which all religions and even Free Thinkers may express themselves openly and in complete freedom? For the Sillonists who, in public lectures and elsewhere, proudly proclaim their personal faith, certainly do not intend to silence others nor do they intend to prevent a Protestant from asserting his Protestantism, and the skeptic from affirming his skepticism. Finally, what are we to think of a Catholic who, on entering his study group, leaves his Catholicism outside the door so as not to alarm his comrades who, "dreaming of disinterested social action, are not inclined to make it serve the triumph of interests, coteries and even convictions whatever they may be"? Such is the profession of faith of the New Democratic Committee for Social Action which has taken over the main objective of the previous organization and which, they say, "breaking the double meaning which surround the Greater Sillon both in reactionary and anti-clerical circles", is now open to all men "who respect moral and religious forces and who are convinced that no genuine social emancipation is possible without the leaven of **generous idealism.**"

Alas! Yes, the double meaning has been broken: the social action of the Sillon is no longer Catholic. The Sillonist, as such, does not work for a coterie, and "the Church," he says, "cannot in any sense benefit from the sympathies that his action may stimulate." A strange situation, indeed! They fear lest the Church should profit for a selfish and interested end by the social action of the Sillon, as if everything that benefited the Church did not benefit the whole human race! A curious reversal of notions! The Church might benefit from social action! As if the greatest economists had not recognized and proved that it is social action alone which, if serious and fruitful, must benefit from the Church! But stranger still, alarming and saddening at the same time, are the audacity and frivolity of men who call themselves Catholics and dream of reshaping society under such conditions, and of establishing on earth, over and beyond the pale of the Catholic Church, "the reign of love and justice" with workers coming from everywhere, of all religions and of no religion, with or without beliefs, so long as they forego what might divide them—their religious and philosophical convictions, and so long as they share what unites them—a "generous idealism and moral forces drawn from whence they can." When we consider the forces, knowledge, and supernatural virtues which are necessary to establish the Christian City, and the sufferings of millions of martyrs, and the light given by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the self-sacrifice of all the heroes of charity, and a powerful hierarchy ordained in heaven, and the streams of Divine Grace—the whole having been built up, bound together, and impregnated by the life and spirit of Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, the Word made man—when we think, I say, of all this, it is frightening to behold new apostles eagerly attempting to do better by a common interchange of vague idealism and civic virtues. What are they going to produce? What is to come of this collaboration? A mere verbal and chimerical construction in which we shall see, glowing in a jumble, and in seductive confusion, the words Liberty, Justice, Fraternity, Love, Equality, and human exultation, all resting upon an ill-understood human dignity. It will be a tumultuous agitation, sterile for the end proposed, but which will benefit the less Utopian exploiters of the people. Yes, we can truly say that the Sillon, its eyes fixed on a chimera, brings Socialism in its train.

We fear that worse is to come: the end result of this developing promiscuousness, the beneficiary of this cosmopolitan social action, can only be a Democracy which will be neither Catholic, nor Protestant, nor Jewish. It will be a religion (for Sillonism, so the leaders have said, is a religion) more universal than the Catholic Church, uniting all men become brothers and comrades at last in the "Kingdom of God." —"We do not work for the Church, we work for mankind."

### **For This Reason, The Sillon Ceased Being Catholic**

And now, overwhelmed with the deepest sadness, We ask Ourselves, Venerable Brethren, what has become of the Catholicism of the Sillon? Alas! this organization which formerly afforded such promising expectations, this limpid and impetuous stream, has been harnessed in its course by the modern enemies of the Church, and is now no more than a miserable affluent of the great movement of apostasy being organized in every country for the establishment of a One-World Church which shall have neither dogmas, nor hierarchy, neither discipline for the mind, nor curb for the passions, and which, under the pretext of freedom and human dignity, would bring back to the world (if such a Church could overcome) the reign of legalized cunning and force, and the oppression of the weak, and of all those who toil and suffer.

### **The Sillon and the Plots of Church Enemies**



We know only too well the dark workshops in which are elaborated these mischievous doctrines which ought not to seduce clear-thinking minds. The leaders of the Sillon have not been able to guard against these doctrines. The exaltation of their sentiments, the indiscriminating goodwill of their hearts, their philosophical mysticism, mixed with a measure of illuminism, have carried them away towards another Gospel which they thought was the true Gospel of Our Savior. To such an extent that they speak of Our Lord Jesus Christ with a familiarity supremely disrespectful, and that—their ideal being akin to that of the Revolution—they fear not to draw between the Gospel and the Revolution blasphemous comparisons for which the excuse cannot be made that they are due to some confused and over-hasty composition.

### **The Sillon Conveys a Distorted Idea of the Divine Redeemer**

We wish to draw your attention, Venerable Brethren, to this distortion of the Gospel and to the sacred character of Our Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, prevailing within the Sillon and elsewhere. As soon as the social question is being approached, it is the fashion in some quarters to first put aside the divinity of Jesus Christ, and then to mention only His unlimited clemency, His compassion for all human miseries, and His pressing exhortations to the love of our neighbor and to the brotherhood of men. True, Jesus has loved us with an immense, infinite love, and He came on earth to suffer and die so that, gathered around Him in justice and love, motivated by the same sentiments of mutual charity, all men might live in peace and happiness. But for the realization of this temporal and eternal happiness, He has laid down with supreme authority the condition that we must belong to His Flock, that we must accept His doctrine, that we must practice virtue, and that we must accept the teaching and guidance of Peter and his successors. Further, whilst Jesus was kind to sinners and to those who went astray, He did not respect their false ideas, however sincere they might have appeared. He loved them all, but He instructed them in order to convert them and save them. Whilst He called to Himself in order to comfort them, those who toiled and suffered, it was not to preach to them the jealousy of a chimerical equality. Whilst He lifted up the lowly, it was not to instill in them the sentiment of a dignity independent from, and rebellious against, the duty of obedience. Whilst His heart overflowed with gentleness for the souls of goodwill, He could also arm Himself with holy indignation against the profaners of the House of God, against the wretched men who scandalized the little ones, against the authorities who crush the people with the weight of heavy burdens without putting out a hand to lift them. He was as strong as he was gentle. He reproved, threatened, chastised, knowing, and teaching us that fear is the beginning of wisdom, and that it is sometimes proper for a man to cut off an offending limb to save his body. Finally, He did not announce for future society the reign of an ideal happiness from which suffering would be banished; but, by His lessons and by His example, He traced the path of the happiness which is possible on earth and of the perfect happiness in heaven: the royal way of the Cross. These are teachings that it would be wrong to apply only to one's personal life in order to win eternal salvation; these are eminently social teachings, and they show in Our Lord Jesus Christ something quite different from an inconsistent and impotent humanitarianism.

### **Exhortation to the Episcopate**

As for you, Venerable Brethren, carry on diligently with the work of the Savior of men by emulating His gentleness and His strength. Minister to every misery; let no sorrow escape your pastoral solicitude; let no lament find you indifferent. But, on the other hand, preach fearlessly their duties to the powerful and to the lowly; it is your function to form the conscience of the people and

of the public authorities. The social question will be much nearer a solution when all those concerned, less demanding as regards their respective rights, shall fulfill their duties more exactly.

Moreover, since in the clash of interests, and especially in the struggle against dishonest forces, the virtue of man, and even his holiness are not always sufficient to guarantee him his daily bread, and since social structures, through their natural interplay, ought to be devised to thwart the efforts of the unscrupulous and enable all men of good will to attain their legitimate share of temporal happiness, We earnestly desire that you should take an active part in the organization of society with this objective in mind. And, to this end, whilst your priests will zealously devote efforts to the sanctification of souls, to the defense of the Church, and also to works of charity in the strict sense, you shall select a few of them, level-headed and of active disposition, holders of Doctors' degrees in philosophy and theology, thoroughly acquainted with the history of ancient and modern civilizations, and you shall set them to the not-so-lofty but more practical study of the social science so that you may place them at the opportune time at the helm of your works of Catholic action. However, let not these priests be misled, in the maze of current opinions, by the miracles of a false Democracy. Let them not borrow from the Rhetoric of the worst enemies of the Church and of the people, the high-flown phrases, full of promises; which are as high-sounding as unattainable. Let them be convinced that the social question and social science did not arise only yesterday; that the Church and the State, at all times and in happy concert, have raised up fruitful organizations to this end; that the Church, which has never betrayed the happiness of the people by consenting to dubious alliances, does not have to free herself from the past; that all that is needed is to take up again, with the help of the true workers for a social restoration, the organisms which the Revolution shattered, and to adapt them, in the same Christian spirit that inspired them, to the new environment arising from the material development of today's society. Indeed, the true friends of the people are neither revolutionaries, nor innovators: they are traditionalists.

### **Members of The Sillon Must Obey**

We desire that the Sillonist youth, freed from their errors, far from impeding this work which is eminently worthy of your pastoral care, should bring to it their loyal and effective contribution in an orderly manner and with befitting submission.

We now turn towards the leaders of the Sillon with the confidence of a father who speaks to his children, and We ask them for their own good, and for the good of the Church and of France, to turn their leadership over to you. We are certainly aware of the extent of the sacrifice that We request from them, but We know them to be of a sufficiently generous disposition to accept it and, in advance, in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ whose unworthy representative We are, We bless them for this. As to the rank and file of the Sillon, We wish that they group themselves according to dioceses in order to work, under the authority of their respective bishops, for the Christian and Catholic regeneration of the people, as well as for the improvement of their lot. These diocesan groups will be independent from one another for the time being. And, in order to show clearly that they have broken with the errors of the past, they will take the name of "Catholic Sillon", and each of the members will add to his Sillonist title the "Catholic" qualification. It goes without saying that each Catholic Sillonist will remain free to retain his political preferences, provided they are purified of everything that is not entirely conformable to the doctrine of the Church. Should some groups refuse, Venerable Brethren, to submit to these conditions, you should consider that very fact that

they are refusing to submit to your authority. Then, you will have to examine whether they stay within the limits of pure politics or economics, or persist in their former errors. In the former case, it is clear that you will have no more to do with them than with the general body of the faithful; in the latter case, you will have to take appropriate measures, with prudence but with firmness also. Priests will have to keep entirely out of the dissident groups, and they shall be content to extend the help of their sacred ministry to each member individually, applying to them in the tribunal of penitence the common rules of morals in respect to doctrine and conduct. As for the Catholic groups, whilst the priests and the seminarians may favor and help them, they shall abstain from joining them as members; for it is fitting that the priestly phalanx should remain above lay associations even when these are most useful and inspired by the best spirit.

Such are the practical measures with which We have deemed necessary to confirm this letter on the Sillon and the Sillonists. From the depths of Our soul We pray that the Lord may cause these men and young people to understand the grave reasons which have prompted it. May He give them the docility of heart and the courage to show to the Church the sincerity of their Catholic fervor. As for you, Venerable Brethren, may the Lord inspire in your hearts towards them—since they will be yours henceforth—the sentiments of a true fatherly love.

In expressing this hope, and to obtain these results which are so desirable, We grant to you, to your clergy and to your people, Our Apostolic benediction with all Our heart.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, on the 25th August 1910, the eighth year of Our Pontificate.

Pius X, Pope



## NOTE TO THE READER

An explanation needs to be made in regard to the texts of Vatican Council I quoted in Chapter IV, in the third and fourth paragraphs.

Those texts perfectly define a doctrine common to all theologians, that is, that Holy Mother Church, by divine institution, is an unequal society in which there is a hierarchy charged with sanctifying, governing and teaching, and the faithful, who are to be sanctified, governed and taught. With his habitual clarity, Father Felix M. Cappello, a notable professor at the Gregorian University, in his *Summa Iuris Publici Ecclesiastici*, n. 324, thus expresses this common doctrine:

*The whole body of the Church, by divine institution, is divided in two classes, of which one is the people, whose components are called **laymen**; and another, whose members are called **clergy**, charged with carrying out the proximate ends of the Church, that is, to sanctify souls and exercise ecclesiastical power (can. 107: Conc. Trid. Sess. XXIII, de ordine, can. 4 Cf. Billot, Tract. de Ecclesia Christi, p. 269 ss. ed. 3rd.; Pesch, Praelectiones Dogmaticae, I, n. 238 ss; Wilmers, De Christi Ecclesia, n. 385 ss; Palmieri, De Romano Pontificae-Proleg. de Ecclesia, 11.*

The distinction between hierarchy and people, governors and governed could not be affirmed in a better way. And since this is a common doctrine of the Church normally accepted by theologians as revealed doctrine, it is not licit for any of the faithful to deny it. Therefore, the whole argumentation we established with the aforementioned texts of the Vatican Council is based on an indisputable doctrinal foundation.

However, it must be said that, contrary to what we erroneously stated in Part I, Chapter 4,<sup>2</sup> the texts of the Vatican Council were not defined by the Council Fathers. This is not a defined matter but a schema presented at the Council, which, due to the interruption of that august assembly, wound up not being proposed for the deliberations of the Fathers.

Therefore, for the reasons expounded above, to deny the doctrine contained in these texts would be to revolt against a truth always deemed in the Church as revealed.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Trans.: In the sections titled "The Elements of the Issue" and "The Error Common to the Two Statements We Refute."]

As for the nature of subject organizations such as Catholic Action, that exist to help the Sacred Hierarchy in its teaching function, there are very decisive texts by the Sovereign Pontiffs.

In the encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*, of January 10, 1890 the Holy Father Leo XIII, speaking about the apostolate of laymen in general, after recalling that the teaching function belongs to the hierarchy by divine right, says:

No one, however, must entertain the notion that private individuals are prevented from taking some active part in this duty of teaching, especially those on whom God has bestowed gifts of mind with the strong wish of rendering themselves useful. These, so often as circumstances demand, may take upon themselves, not, indeed, the office of the pastor, but the task of communicating to others what they have themselves received, becoming, as it were, living echoes of their masters in the faith.<sup>3</sup>

In the encyclical *Vehementer*, of February 11, 1906 His Holiness Pius X defined the same principles in other terms:

The Scripture teaches us, and the tradition of the Fathers confirms the teaching, that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, ruled by the **Pastors** and **Doctors** (I Ephes. iv. II sqq.) - - a society of men containing within its own fold chiefs who have full and perfect powers for ruling, teaching and judging (Matt. 23: 18-20; 16:18,19; 18:17; Tit. 2:15; 2 Cor. 10:6; xiii. 10. & c.) It follows that the Church is essentially an **unequal** society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors.<sup>4</sup>

Let it not be said that the directions of Pius XI in this sense introduced any innovation. In his speech to Catholic journalists of June 26, 1929 the Pope expresses the desire that Catholic Action, "not only help the Good Press in a powerful way but by the very force of things, make this into one of the most important functions, activities and energies of Catholic Action itself." In other words, the apostolate of the Press is a typical apostolate of Catholic Action.

Now, for Pius XI, this apostolate pertains clearly to the learning Church:

---

<sup>3</sup> Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae*, no. 16.

<sup>4</sup> St. Pius X, Encyclical *Vehementer Nos*, no. 8.

*Catholic journalists are thus precious speakers for the Church, her hierarchy and teaching: therefore, they are the noblest and highest speakers of everything that Holy Mother Church says and does. By performing this function the Catholic Press does not become part of the teaching Church; it remains in the learning Church but does not thereby cease to be the messenger of the discipline of the teaching Church in all directions, this Church in charge of teaching the nations of the world.*

Therefore, in regard to the hierarchy in general and to the Magisterium that belongs to the hierarchy in particular, the doctrine of the Pontiffs and the common teaching of theologians fully confirm the proposal made at the Vatican Council; and the arguments we developed in Part I, Chapter 4 are founded on truths that are not licit for anyone to deny, under penalty, if not of heresy, at least of erring in the Faith.