

MISERENTISSIMUS REDEMPTOR

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and other Local Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and the Apostolic Blessing.

1. Our Most Merciful Redeemer, after He had wrought salvation for mankind on the tree of the Cross and before He ascended from out this world to the Father, said to his Apostles and Disciples, to console them in their anxiety, "*Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*" (Matt 28:20). These words, which are indeed most pleasing, are a cause of all hope and security, and they bring us, Venerable Brethren, ready succor, whenever we look round from this watch-tower raised on high and see all human society laboring amid so many evils and miseries, and the Church herself beset without ceasing by attacks and machinations. For as in the beginning this Divine promise lifted up the despondent spirit of the Apostles and enkindled and inflamed them so that they might cast the seeds of the Gospel teaching throughout the whole world; so ever since it has strengthened the Church unto her victory over the gates of hell. In sooth, Our Lord Jesus Christ has been with his Church in every age, but He has been with her with more present aid and protection whenever she has been assailed by graver perils and difficulties. For the remedies adapted to the condition of time and circumstances, are always supplied by Divine Wisdom, who reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly (Ps 8:1). But in this latter age also, "the hand of the Lord is not shortened" (Is 59:1), more especially since error has crept in and has spread far and wide, so that it might well be feared that the fountains of Christian life might be in a manner dried up, where men are cut off from the love and knowledge of God. Now, since it may be that some of the people do not know, and others do not heed, those complaints which the most loving Jesus made when He manifested Himself to Margaret Mary Alacoque, and those things likewise which at the same time He asked and expected of men, for their own ultimate profit, it is our pleasure, Venerable Brethren, to speak to you for a little while concerning the duty of honorable satisfaction which we all owe to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the intent that you may, each of you, carefully teach your own flocks those things which we set before you, and stir them up to put the same in practice.
2. Among the many proofs of the boundless benignity of our Redeemer, there is one that stands out conspicuously, to wit the fact that when the charity of Christian people was growing cold, the Divine Charity itself was set forth to be honored by a special worship, and the riches of its bounty was made widely manifest by that form of devotion wherein worship is given to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, "*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col 2:3). For as in olden time when mankind came forth from Noe's ark, God set His "*bow in the clouds*" (Gen 2:14), shining as the sign of a friendly covenant; so in the most turbulent times of a more recent age, when the Jansenist heresy, the most crafty of them all, hostile to love and piety towards God, was creeping in and preaching that God was not to be loved as a father but rather to be feared as an implacable judge; then the most benign Jesus showed his own most Sacred Heart to the nations lifted up as a standard of peace and charity

portending no doubtful victory in the combat. And indeed 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.*"

3. And rightly indeed is that said, Venerable Brethren. For is not the sum of all religion and therefore the pattern of more perfect life, contained in that most auspicious sign and in the form of piety that follows from it inasmuch as it more readily leads the minds of men to an intimate knowledge of Christ Our Lord, and more efficaciously moves their hearts to love Him more vehemently and to imitate Him more closely? It is no wonder, therefore, that Our Predecessors have constantly defended this most approved form of devotion from the censures of calumniators, and have extolled it with high praise and promoted it very zealously, as the needs of time and circumstance demanded. Moreover, by the inspiration of God's grace, it has come to pass that the pious devotion of the faithful towards the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus has made great increase in the course of time; hence pious confraternities to promote the worship of the Divine Heart are everywhere erected, hence too the custom of receiving Holy Communion on the first Friday of every month at the desire of Christ Jesus, a custom which now prevails everywhere.
4. But assuredly among those things which properly pertain to the worship of the Most Sacred Heart, a special place must be given to that Consecration, whereby we devote ourselves and all things that are ours to the Divine Heart of Jesus, acknowledging that we have received all things from the everlasting love of God. When Our Savior had taught Margaret Mary, the most innocent disciple of His Heart, how much He desired that this duty of devotion should be rendered to him by men, moved in this not so much by His own right as by His immense charity for us; she herself, with her spiritual father, Claude de la Colombiere, rendered it the first of all. Thereafter followed, in the course of time, individual men, then private families and associations, and lastly civil magistrates, cities and kingdoms. But since in the last century, and in this present century, things have come to such a pass, that by the machinations of wicked men the sovereignty of Christ Our Lord has been denied and war is publicly waged against the Church, by passing laws and promoting plebiscites repugnant to Divine and natural law, nay more by holding assemblies of them that cry out, "*We will not have this man to reign over us*" (Luke 19:14): from the aforesaid Consecration there burst forth over against them in keenest opposition the voice of all the clients of the Most Sacred Heart, as it were one voice, to vindicate His glory and to assert His rights: "*Christ must reign*" (1Cor 15:25); "*Thy kingdom come*" (Mat 4:10). From this at length it happily came to pass that at the beginning of this century the whole human race which Christ, in whom all things are re-established (Eph 1:10), possesses by native right as His own, was dedicated to the same Most Sacred Heart, with the applause of the whole Christian world, by Our Predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII.

Now these things so auspiciously and happily begun as we taught in Our Encyclical Letter "*Quas primas*," we Ourselves, consenting to very many long-continued desires and prayers

of Bishops and people, brought to completion and perfected, by God's grace, when at the close of the Jubilee Year, We instituted the Feast of Christ the King of All, to be solemnly celebrated throughout the whole Christian world. Now when we did this, not only did we set in a clear light that supreme sovereignty which Christ holds over the whole universe, over civil and domestic society, and over individual men, but at the same time we anticipated the joys of that most auspicious day, whereon the whole world will gladly and willingly render obedience to the most sweet lordship of Christ the King. For this reason, We decreed at the same time that this same Consecration should be renewed every year on the occasion of that appointed festal day, so that the fruit of this same Consecration might be obtained more certainly and more abundantly, and all peoples might be joined together in Christian charity and in the reconciliation of peace, in the Heart of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

5. But to all these duties, more especially to that fruitful Consecration which was in a manner confirmed by the sacred solemnity of Christ the King, something else must needs be added, and it is concerning this that it is our pleasure to speak with you more at length, Venerable Brethren, on the present occasion: we mean that duty of honorable satisfaction or reparation which must be rendered to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For if the first and foremost thing in Consecration is this, that the creature's love should be given in return for the love of the Creator, another thing follows from this at once, namely that to the same uncreated Love, if so be it has been neglected by forgetfulness or violated by offense, some sort of compensation must be rendered for the injury, and this debt is commonly called by the name of reparation.

Now though in both these matters we are impelled by quite the same motives, none the less we are holden to the duty of reparation and expiation by a certain more valid title of justice and of love, of justice indeed, in order that the offense offered to God by our sins may be expiated and that the violated order may be repaired by penance: and of love too so that we may suffer together with Christ suffering and "*filled with reproaches*" (Lam 3:30), and for all our poverty may offer Him some little solace. For since we are all sinners and laden with many faults, our God must be honored by us not only by that worship wherewith we adore His infinite Majesty with due homage, or acknowledge His supreme dominion by praying, or praise His boundless bounty by thanksgiving; but besides this we must need make satisfaction to God the just avenger, "*for our numberless sins and offenses and negligences.*" To Consecration, therefore, whereby we are devoted to God and are called holy to God, by that holiness and stability which, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, is proper to consecration (2a. 2ae. qu. 81, a. 8. c.), there must be added expiation, whereby sins are wholly blotted out, lest the holiness of the supreme justice may punish our shameless unworthiness, and reject our offering as hateful rather than accept it as pleasing.

Moreover this duty of expiation is laid upon the whole race of men since, as we are taught by the Christian faith, after Adam's miserable fall, infected by hereditary stain, subject to concupiscences and most wretchedly depraved, it would have been thrust down into eternal destruction. This indeed is denied by the wise men of this age of ours, who following the ancient error of Pelagius, ascribe to human nature a certain native virtue by which of its own force it can go onward to higher things; but the Apostle rejects these false opinions of human pride, admonishing us that we "*were by nature children of wrath*" (Eph 2:3). And indeed, even from the beginning, men in a manner acknowledged this common debt of expiation and, led by a certain natural instinct, they endeavored to appease God by public sacrifices.

6. But no created power was sufficient to expiate the sins of men, if the Son of God had not assumed man's nature in order to redeem it. This, indeed, the Savior of men Himself declared by the mouth of the sacred Psalmist: "*Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not: but a body thou hast fitted to me: Holocausts for sin did not please thee: then said I: Behold I come*" (Heb 10:5-7). And in very deed, "*Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows. . . He was wounded for our iniquities (Is 53:4-5), and He His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree . . . (1Pet 2:24), "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross . . ." (Col 2:14) "that we being dead to sins, should live to justice" (1Pet 2:24).*
7. Yet, though the copious redemption of Christ has abundantly forgiven us all offenses (Cf. Col 2:14), nevertheless, because of that wondrous divine dispensation whereby those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ are to be filled up in our flesh for His body which is the Church (Cf. Col 1:24), to the praises and satisfactions, "*which Christ in the name of sinners rendered unto God*" we can also add our praises and satisfactions, and indeed it behooves us so to do.
8. But we must ever remember that the whole virtue of the expiation depends on the one bloody sacrifice of Christ, which without intermission of time is renewed on our altars in an unbloody manner, "*For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different*" (Council of Trent, Session XXIII, Chapter 2). Wherefore with this most august Eucharistic Sacrifice there ought to be joined an oblation both of the ministers and of all the faithful, so that they also may "*present themselves living sacrifices, holy, pleasing unto God*" (Rom 12:1). Nay more, 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*" (Eph 6:3). For this reason, the Apostle admonishes us that "*bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus*" (2Cor 4:10), and buried together with Christ, and planted together in the likeness of His death (Cf. Rom 4:4-5), 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*" (2Pet 1:4), but "*that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies*" (2Cor 4:10) and being made partakers of His eternal priesthood we are to offer up "*gifts and sacrifices for sins*" (Heb 5:1).

Nor do those only enjoy a participation in this mystic priesthood and in the office of satisfying and sacrificing, whom our Pontiff Christ Jesus uses as His ministers to offer up the clean oblation to God's Name in every place from the rising of the sun to the going down (Mal 1-2), but the whole Christian people rightly called by the Prince of the Apostles "*a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood*" (1Pet 2:9), ought to offer for sins both for itself and for all mankind (Cf. Heb 5:3), in much the same manner as every priest and pontiff "*taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God*" (Heb 5:1).

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 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. For there is a wondrous and close union of all the faithful with Christ, such as that which prevails between the head and the other members; moreover by that mystic Communion of Saints

which we profess in the Catholic creed, both individual men and peoples are joined together not only with one another but also with him, "*who is the head, Christ; from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity*" (Eph 4:15-16). It was this indeed that the Mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus, when He was near to death, asked of His Father: "*I in them, and thou in me: that they may be made perfect in one*" (John 17:23).

Wherefore, even as consecration proclaims and confirms this union with Christ, so does expiation begin that same union by washing away faults, and perfect it by participating in the sufferings of Christ, and consummate it by offering victims for the brethren. And this indeed was the purpose of the merciful Jesus, when He showed His Heart to us bearing about it the symbols of the passion and displaying the flames of love, that from the one we might know the infinite malice of sin, and in the other we might admire the infinite charity of Our Redeemer, and so might have a more vehement hatred of sin, and make a more ardent return of love for His love.

9. And truly the spirit of expiation or reparation has always had the first and foremost place in the worship given to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and nothing is more in keeping with the origin, the character, the power, and the distinctive practices of this form of devotion, as appears from the record of history and custom, as well as from the sacred liturgy and the acts of the Sovereign Pontiffs. For when Christ manifested Himself to Margaret Mary, and declared to her the infinitude of His love, at the same time, in the manner of a mourner, He complained that so many and such great injuries were done to Him by ungrateful men -- and we would that these words in which He made this complaint were fixed in the minds of the faithful, and were never blotted out by oblivion: "*Behold this Heart*" -- He said -- "*which has loved men so much and has loaded them with all benefits, and for this boundless love has had no return but neglect, and contumely, and this often from those who were bound by a debt and duty of a more special love.*" In order that these faults might be washed away, He then recommended several things to be done, and in particular the following as most pleasing to Himself, namely that men should approach the Altar with this purpose of expiating sin, making what is called a Communion of Reparation, -- and that they should likewise make expiatory supplications and prayers, prolonged for a whole hour, --which is rightly called the "Holy Hour." These pious exercises have been approved by the Church and have also been enriched with copious indulgences.
10. But how can these rites of expiation bring solace now, when Christ is already reigning in the beatitude of Heaven? To this we may answer in some words of St. Augustine which are very apposite here, --"*Give me one who loves, and he will understand what I say*" (In Johannis evangelium, tract. XXVI, 4). For any one who has great love of God, if he will look back through the tract of past time may dwell in meditation on Christ, and see Him laboring for man, sorrowing, suffering the greatest hardships, "*for us men and for our salvation,*" well-nigh worn out with sadness, with anguish, nay "*bruised for our sins*" (Is 53:5), and healing us by His bruises. And the minds of the pious meditate on all these things the more truly, because the sins of men and their crimes committed in every age were the cause why Christ was delivered up to death, and now also they would of themselves bring death to Christ, joined with the same griefs and sorrows, since each several sin in its own way is held to renew the passion of Our Lord: "*Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making*

him a mockery" (Heb 4:6). Now if, because of our sins also which were as yet in the future, but were foreseen, the soul of Christ became sorrowful unto death, it cannot be doubted that then, too, already He derived somewhat of solace from our reparation, which was likewise foreseen, when "*there appeared to Him an angel from heaven*" (Lk 22:43), in order that His Heart, oppressed with weariness and anguish, might find consolation. And so even now, in a wondrous yet true manner, we can and ought to console that Most Sacred Heart which is continually wounded by the sins of thankless men, since --as we also read in the sacred liturgy -- Christ Himself, by the mouth of the Psalmist complains that He is forsaken by His friends: "*My Heart hath expected reproach and misery, and I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none*" (Ps 68:21).

11. To this it may be added that the expiatory passion of Christ is renewed and in a manner continued and fulfilled in His mystical body, which is the Church. For, to use once more the words of St. Augustine, "*Christ suffered whatever it behoved Him to suffer; now nothing is wanting of the measure of the sufferings. Therefore the sufferings were fulfilled, but in the head; there were yet remaining the sufferings of Christ in His body*" (In Psalm Ixxxvi). This, indeed, Our Lord Jesus Himself vouchsafed to explain when, speaking to Saul, "*as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter*" (Acts 9:11), He said, "*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*" (Acts 5), clearly signifying that when persecutions are stirred up against the Church, the Divine Head of the Church is Himself attacked and troubled. Rightly, therefore, does Christ, still suffering in His mystical body, desire to have us partakers of His expiation, and this is also demanded by our intimate union with Him, for since we are "*the body of Christ and members of member*" (1Cor 12:27), whatever the head suffers, all the members must suffer with it (Cf. 1Cor 12:27).
12. Now, how great is the necessity of this expiation or reparation, more especially in this our age, will be manifest to every one who, as we said at the outset, will examine the world, "*seated in wickedness*" (1Jn 5:19), with his eyes and with his mind. For from all sides the cry of the peoples who are mourning comes up to us, and their princes or rulers have indeed stood up and met together in one against the Lord and against His Church (Cf. Ps 2:2). Throughout those regions indeed, we see that all rights both human and Divine are confounded. Churches are thrown down and overturned, religious men and sacred virgins are torn from their homes and are afflicted with abuse, with barbarities, with hunger and imprisonment; bands of boys and girls are snatched from the bosom of their mother the Church, and are induced to renounce Christ, to blaspheme and to attempt the worst crimes of lust; the whole Christian people, sadly disheartened and disrupted, are continually in danger of falling away from the faith, or of suffering the most cruel death. These things 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*" (2Thes 2:4).

But it is yet more to be lamented, Venerable Brethren, that among the faithful themselves, washed in Baptism with the blood of the immaculate Lamb, and enriched with grace, there are found so many men of every class, who laboring under an incredible ignorance of Divine things and infected with false doctrines, far from their Father's home, lead a life involved in vices, a life which is not brightened by the light of true faith, nor gladdened by the hope of future beatitude, nor refreshed and cherished by the fire of charity; so that they truly seem to

sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Moreover, among the faithful there is a greatly increasing carelessness of ecclesiastical discipline, and of those ancient institutions on which all Christian life rests, by which domestic society is governed, and the sanctity of marriage is safeguarded; the education of children is altogether neglected, or else it is depraved by too indulgent blandishments, and the Church is even robbed of the power of giving the young a Christian education; there is a sad forgetfulness of Christian modesty especially in the life and the dress of women; there is an unbridled cupidity of transitory things, a want of moderation in civic affairs, an unbounded ambition of popular favor, a depreciation of legitimate authority, and lastly a contempt for the word of God, whereby faith itself is injured, or is brought into proximate peril.

But all these evils as it were culminate in the cowardice and the sloth of those who, after the manner of the sleeping and fleeing disciples, wavering in their faith, miserably forsake Christ when He is oppressed by anguish or surrounded by the satellites of Satan, and in the perfidy of those others who following the example of the traitor Judas, either partake of the holy table rashly and sacrilegiously, or go over to the camp of the enemy. 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*" (Mat 24:12).

13. Now, whosoever of the faithful have piously pondered on all these things must need be inflamed with the charity of Christ in His agony and make a more vehement endeavor to expiate their own faults and those of others, to repair the honor of Christ, and to promote the eternal salvation of souls. And indeed that saying of the Apostle: "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (Rom 5:20) may be used in a manner to describe this present age; for while the wickedness of men has been greatly increased, at the same time, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, a marvelous increase has been made in the number of the faithful of both sexes who with eager mind endeavor to make satisfaction for the many injuries offered to the Divine Heart, nay more they do not hesitate to offer themselves to Christ as victims. For indeed if anyone will lovingly dwell on those things of which we have been speaking, and will have them deeply fixed in his mind, it cannot be but he will shrink with horror from all sin as from the greatest evil, and more than this he will yield himself wholly to the will of God, and will strive to repair the injured honor of the Divine Majesty, as well by constantly praying, as by voluntary mortifications, by patiently bearing the afflictions that befall him, and lastly by spending his whole life in this exercise of expiation.

And for this reason also there have been established many religious families of men and women whose purpose it is by earnest service, both by day and by night, in some manner to fulfill the office of the Angel consoling Jesus in the garden; hence come certain associations of pious men, approved by the Apostolic See and enriched with indulgences, who take upon themselves this same duty of making expiation, a duty which is to be fulfilled by fitting exercises of devotion and of the virtues; hence lastly, to omit other things, come the devotions and solemn demonstrations for the purpose of making reparation to the offended Divine honor, which are inaugurated everywhere, not only by pious members of the faithful, but by parishes, dioceses and cities.

14. These things being so, Venerable Brethren, just as the rite of consecration, starting from humble beginnings, and afterwards more widely propagated, was at length crowned with success by Our confirmation; so in like manner, we earnestly desire that this custom of

expiation or pious reparation, long since devoutly introduced and devoutly propagated, may also be more firmly sanctioned by Our Apostolic authority and more solemnly celebrated by the whole Catholic name. Wherefore, we decree and command that every year on the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, -- which feast indeed on this occasion we have ordered to be raised to the degree of a double of the first class with an octave -- in all churches throughout the whole world, the same expiatory prayer or protestation as it is called, to Our most loving Savior, set forth in the same words according to the copy subjoined to this letter shall be solemnly recited, so that all our faults may be washed away with tears, and reparation may be made for the violated rights of Christ the supreme King and Our most loving Lord.

There is surely no reason for doubting, Venerable Brethren, that from this devotion piously established and commanded to the whole Church, many excellent benefits will flow forth not only to individual men but also to society, sacred, civil, and domestic, seeing that our Redeemer Himself promised to Margaret Mary that "*all those who rendered this honor to His Heart would be endowed with an abundance of heavenly graces.*" Sinners indeed, looking on Him whom they pierced (Jn 19:37), moved by the sighs and tears of the whole Church, by grieving for the injuries offered to the supreme King, will return to the heart (Is 46:8), lest perchance being hardened in their faults, when they see Him whom they pierced "*coming in the clouds of heaven*" (Mt 26:64), too late and in vain they shall bewail themselves because of Him (Cf. Rev 1:7). But the just shall be justified and shall be sanctified still (Cf. Rev 22:11) and they will devote themselves wholly and with new ardor to the service of their King, when they see Him contemned and attacked and assailed with so many and such great insults, but more than all will they burn with zeal for the eternal salvation of souls when they have pondered on the complaint of the Divine Victim: "*What profit is there in my blood?*" (Ps 19:10), and likewise on the joy that will be felt by the same Most Sacred Heart of Jesus "*upon one sinner doing penance*" (Lk 15:4). And this indeed we more especially and vehemently desire and confidently expect, that the just and merciful God who would have spared Sodom for the sake of ten just men, will much more be ready to spare the whole race of men, when He is moved by the humble petitions and happily appeased by the prayers of the community of the faithful praying together in union with Christ their Mediator and Head, in the name of all.

15. And now lastly may the most benign Virgin Mother of God smile on this purpose and on these desires of ours; for since she brought forth for us Jesus our Redeemer, and nourished Him, and offered Him as a victim by the Cross, by her mystic union with Christ and His very special grace she likewise became and is piously called a reparatress. Trusting in her intercession with Christ, who whereas He is the "one mediator of God and men" (1Tim 2:3), chose to make His Mother the advocate of sinners, and the minister and mediatrix of grace, as an earnest of heavenly gifts and as a token of Our paternal affection we most lovingly impart the Apostolic Blessing to you, Venerable Brethren, and to all the flock committed to your care.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the eighth day of May, 1928, in the seventh year of Our Pontificate.