

## WHY DOESN'T SHE DO SOMETHING?

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*BENEDICT JOSEPH, O.P.*



TIMOTHY BURNS stopped and gaped at his companion, a long-winded, know-it-all of the small, country town. He was getting an ear-full of how Communism had already overthrown many of the European governments and how it was planning to overthrow our own.

"But, why doesn't the Church do something about it?" Timothy asked his companion who stopped to get his breath, and who had not said a word about what the Church was doing.

Unfortunately, his companion, like so many Catholics, had not bothered finding out that the Church, through her Popes and Priests, has been continuously condemning it, warning the faithful against it, and giving them a positive program to offset it.

The truth of the fact is that when that diabolical way of life, for that is what Communism really is, first appeared, the Church saw it for what it was and denounced it. As it became more powerful, deadly, and destructive, the Church became more insistent in her warnings that it aimed at destroying the present social order and at undermining the foundations of Christian civilization.

### THE PONTIFFS SPEAK

Could the Vicars of Christ remain silent and passive in face of a system that has launched against the Church such persecutions as she has never yet experienced; that has in itself the power of dragging down entire peoples into a barbarism worse than that which oppressed the greater part of the world at the coming of the Savior? No! And so Pope Pius IX condemned it as "absolutely contrary to the natural law itself, and if once adopted would utterly destroy the rights, property and possessions of all men, and even society itself." And after him, Leo XIII denounced it as "the fatal plague which insinuates itself into the very marrow of human society only to bring about its ruin."

The Holy Pontiffs have not stopped at a mere condemnation; they have given positive principles with which to combat it. Leo XIII laid down certain principles and made clear the nature of man and society in his Encyclical letter on "The Condition of Labor"; and Pius XI, in his "Reconstructing the Social Order," expanded and applied them to more recent times. Finally, deploring the rapid growth of Communism, Pius XI wrote his Encyclical on "Atheistic Communism" in which he once and for all revealed the true nature of Communism and proposed the remedies most apt to destroy it.

#### RENEWAL OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

The first remedy he proposed was the renewal of Christian life. He called this the fundamental remedy. It consists in a sincere renewal of private and public life according to the principles of the Gospel. The result of such a renewal of life in each and all who belong to the Fold of Christ would be the preservation of human society from total corruption. Now, giving little or no thought to this counsel, the Christian might ask, "Is that all?" But after careful thought he will conclude that it is a big *all*; for by so returning to a life according to the principles of the Gospel, the Christian will turn his back on Communism which falsely and alluringly offers him a heaven on earth, and direct all his thoughts and actions to the true heaven which can only be had after this earthly life.

In this regard, the Holy Father insisted on detachment from earthly goods and on the precept of charity. The Communist would have us place as our goal in life an abundance of worldly goods; the Church would have us detach ourselves from them. To the poor and rich alike she recalls the words of our Lord: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."<sup>1</sup> The poor must not despise their poverty; the rich must not glory in their riches. Rather they should consider themselves stewards and must remember that one day they will have to render an account of their stewardship. They should give from their abundance to the poor and needy, who, on the other hand, must not try to destroy the rich and bring about an equality among all men. To do this is impossible, for there is a natural inequality between man and man. Skill, health, and strength differ in all men; therefore, fortune will differ from fortune.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 3.

Detachment from worldly goods is important, but what is even more important as a remedy for the present evil, the Holy Pontiff pointed out, is the precept of charity. By charity, here, he meant that Christian Charity which is patient and kind and which won over to Christ the pagan world, especially the poorest of the poor, the slaves. He recommended those charitable institutions, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which perform spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and which go right to the poor. The poor and the workingman, on the other hand, realizing more and more what the spirit of love animated by the virtue of Christ is doing for them, will draw closer to their defender, the Church.

However, charity cannot be true charity if justice is lacking. This obligation of justice falls not only on the employer, but also on the employee. Both should work in complete harmony. Both should have the common good in mind. If they worked together thus, economic life as a whole would be pursued in tranquillity and order.

#### INSTRUCTION IN SOCIAL PROBLEMS

After proposing this first remedy, which all agree to be the first and foremost to be applied to Communism, Pius XI said that the people must be instructed in social problems in the light of the doctrine of the Church and under her guidance. Hence, labor schools should be conducted. Men's minds must be illuminated with the pure light of the doctrine of the Church; their wills must be drawn to follow and apply it as a norm of right duties. Nor should these social doctrines be given to a selected few, but to as many as possible, and especially to the working classes.

In this regard, the Catholic press can and should play a big part. Its duty is to foster in various attractive ways an ever better understanding of social doctrine. It should serve the purpose of exposing Communistic tactics, and thereby create in the faithful a distrust of such tactics. In the beginning Communism was bold and showed itself for what it was in all its perversity; but it had to change its tactics because it was thus alienating the people. Now it tries to entice the multitudes by all sorts of trickery, hiding its real designs behind ideas that in themselves are attractive and good. For instance, they take advantage of the world's desire for peace and present themselves

as promoters of it; and all the while they are gradually destroying the things that will give peace to the world. At times they make proposals that are in perfect harmony with the Christian spirit and the doctrine of the Church; but still, the Holy Father said that Communism is intrinsically wrong, and for all its alluring proposals, no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever. To expose these various tactics and to keep the faithful on their guard against them is the duty of the Catholic press.

All these remedies are in vain, though, if there is lacking a last and most efficacious remedy, the spirit of prayer joined with Christian penance. Did not our Lord say, when the Apostles asked Him why they had been unable to drive the evil spirit from a demoniac, "This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting?"<sup>2</sup> So, too, the evil which lies heavily on humanity can be conquered only by a world-wide holy crusade of prayer and penance. The Pontiff asked all, especially the contemplative Orders both of men and women, to redouble their prayers and sacrifices to obtain from heaven aid for the Church in the present struggle. He asked especially that they implore the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Virgin who, having crushed the head of the serpent of old, still remains the sure protectress and invincible "Help of Christians."

Not content with showing how to combat Communism, Pius XI, like a true leader, turned to his cohorts, the Bishops and Priests, and urged them on to battle. It is their duty, he told them, to keep alight in the world the torch of Faith, and to fill the hearts of the faithful with the supernatural trust which has aided the Church to fight and win so many other battles in the name of Christ: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our Faith."<sup>3</sup>

As if to lead the march into the field of battle, Pius XI began a movement (or rather revived an ancient one) that was very dear to his heart—Catholic Action, he called it. He defined it as "participation by the laity in the work of the Hierarchy." Its object is to spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ among individuals, in families and in society. And as an aid to Catholic Action he asked men and women who lived in the same cultural atmosphere and shared the same way of life to form Auxiliary Organi-

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<sup>2</sup> Matt. viii, 20.

<sup>3</sup> I, John v, 4.

zations such as associations of farmers, workmen, doctors, and the like.

Finally, the Holy Father, to insure victory over Communism, placed the vast campaign of the Church under the standard of St. Joseph, her mighty protector.

#### THE SPIRIT OF PIUS XI LIVES ON

Pius XI is dead; but his indomitable spirit lives on in his great successor, Pius XII, who more than once has shown that he will lead the struggle against Communism not only in his poor, wartorn Italy but also throughout the whole world. Pius XI is dead; but his principles are being carried out by the Bishops, Priests, and the faithful. The Bishops have studied his Encyclical on "Atheistic Communism" and have carefully explained it to the faithful; the Priests have literally gone to the workingman, have formed labor schools and instructed many in social doctrine, and have encouraged Catholic Action in all its forms—Youth organizations, labor unions, The Confraternity of Jesus the Workman. The Holy Name Society, and many more; and lastly, the faithful, encouraged by such leadership, have responded more and more to their directions. Pius XI is dead; but in his spirit the Catholic press has boldly exposed Communism and its deceitful tactics and has taught Catholics how to avoid its snares.

No, Mr. Timothy Burns, Holy Mother Church is doing something about Communism. She is not asleep but vigilant. Rather, it is the multitude of Catholics who are asleep to the dangers of Communism and to the doctrines proposed by the Church. All she asks is that you and all the faithful trust her and do what she says, and she promises that Communism will be destroyed and peaceful relations among all men and all nations will be restored.