

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS IN CHRIST THROUGH MARY

Saint Pius X's Program for a True and Lasting Peace

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BENEATH AN OPEN SKY stands an immense throng.

St. Peter's Square is filled with joyous faithful who have gathered from many parts of the world in the eternal city.

From the esplanade in front of the Basilica a man of ascetic countenance is speaking words of sublime dignity. It is May 29, 1954, and Pope Pius XII is proclaiming to the Church that his predecessor, Pius X, is a saint.

Above the sky all the citizens of heaven behold the sight below. The celestial choirs are sounding their glorious strains, echoing the joy brought by another saint. Within the bosom of the Blessed Trinity, the sacred words, being uttered by Christ's Vicar upon earth, receive eternal ratification.

St. Pius X, raised to the altars of the Church, looks down upon his beloved city of Rome. But his loving gaze is not restricted; it embraces every place where souls are to be saved. His apostolic spirit, which knew no limits in this world, has now reached its perfection. As he sees the suffering Christ in His many members who are being sinfully persecuted, we might hear this prayer poured forth from his priestly heart: "O Lady of immaculate love, show them the way to true peace. Lead them along the path to perfect union with thy divine Son." This prayer is a continuation in heaven of his whole life's work. The substance of his program to establish real concord among men is laid down in the first two encyclicals of his pontificate. We should do well then in reflecting upon them to enlighten our minds and enkindle our hearts.

When, on October 4, 1903, Pope Pius X issued his first encyclical letter, *E Supremi Apostolatus*, concerning the restoration of all things in Christ, he was actually giving men his spiritual autobiography. During his childhood at Riese, he showed his love for the Savior by spending some time with Him each day before the Blessed Sacrament. His preparation for the priesthood was a period of becoming more and more intimate with the eternal High Priest. Then after his ordination, as a young curate at Tombolo, as the pastor of Salzano, the Canon of Treviso, spiritual director of the seminary, Bishop of Mantua, and Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, he labored in season and out of season so that Christ would be brought forth in

souls. His entire priestly existence had been spent in trying to recapitulate all things in Christ.

Now, as supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, he had the greatest right and responsibility to continue his life's work. After addressing the letter to all Ordinaries in peace and communion with the Apostolic See, he first of all reflects his own sanctity by saying that he accepts the elevation to the pontificate, as a cross sent from God. Filled with a humble consciousness of his own weakness in the face of such an arduous task, especially since the times are so godless, his soul receives strength and peace from resignation to the divine Will. He also draws consolation from the certainty of the hierarchy's cooperation in carrying out the program of his pontificate.

"Since, however, it has been pleasing to the Divine Will to raise our lowliness to such sublimity of power, we take courage in Him Who strengthens us, and setting ourselves to work, relying on the power of God, we proclaim that we have no other program in the Supreme Pontificate but that 'of restoring all things in Christ' (Ephes. 1, 10). so that 'Christ may be all in all' (Coloss. 3, 11)." St. Pius chooses his texts from the epistles of St. Paul, whom he resembles so strongly. The great Apostle of the nations, who declared: "For me to live is Christ" (Philip. 1, 21), will provide the inspiration and motto for a Pope who will strive to make Christ the soul of a society that had become homocentric. And thus he will direct all his efforts to the restoration of a true peace among all men. "For there is but one party of order capable of restoring peace in the midst of all this turmoil, and that is the party of God."

The inspired words adopted by St. Pius for his motto were wisely selected. For in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, St. Paul is speaking about the Grace of Christ as it is present in His Mystical Body, and in particular about its principal effect, namely unity. In the beginning of the first epistle, the Apostle tells the faithful that the Father's plan for their sanctification is brought about by His divine Son through Whom He "hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children" (Ephes. 1, 5). From all eternity the time of the Incarnation and of our Redemption was determined in the divine foreknowledge; and when the time came for it to be fulfilled, the great Mystery which had been hidden in the Godhead was revealed to us. In the fullness of time, then, all things would be recapitulated, i.e. "*re-headed*" by Christ, Who would be the Head of His Mystical Body. The work of our sanctification, St. Paul continues to say, will be carried to completion by the Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Blessed Trinity, therefore, the Alpha and Omega of all that we are

and have, is intimately associated with the work of our salvation. But it was the office of the Son to assume a human nature and become our Head. St. Pius adds to his spiritual slogan of restoring all things in Christ, "so that Christ may be all in all," which is taken from St. Paul's letter to the Colossians (3, 11). According to the context of these sacred words, Christ has united all differences in Himself; no longer is there slave man and free, but all enjoy the liberty of Christ, Who bestows His benefits upon all. Thus the gift of Wisdom was at work in the joining of these two texts from Holy Writ. Both represent to us the unity of Christ's Mystical Body, wherein alone can there be found that true peace which is the tranquility of order.

But how are we to reach Christ? The answer is found in the Catholic Church. He established this visible society, which in truth is His Mystical Body, to make continuously available for mankind the graces which He merited for all on the cross. The Eucharistic Sacrifice and all the sacraments are in her charge she has the duty of rendering due worship to the Most Blessed Trinity. As custodian of truth, she must safeguard her children from error, and strive always to keep them in the path of virtue. Until the end of time therefore, when the Church Militant shall become the Church Triumphant in heaven, hers is a ceaseless warfare of good against evil, of Christ's soldiers against Satan's cohorts. She must then use every means at her disposal to further the cause of her King, especially in an age when a false liberalism seeks to compromise on principles for the sake of expediency.

The Church's first concern must be to form Christ in those whose duty it will be to form Him in others. Everything else must be secondary to the training of holy priests. Seminarians must become imbued with sound doctrine, and adorned with priestly virtue. Special guidance should be given to those in the tender years of their priesthood, and also encouragement to devote their strength to the salvation of souls. The primary concern of the priest must be to feed the lambs of Christ. For this purpose worldly wisdom falls far short; only that wisdom which is from above will suffice for so high a calling. They must themselves be well nourished with Christian Doctrine and the words of Sacred Scripture.

Then, and only then, will the priest be prepared to give that religious instruction so badly needed among the faithful. He will be equipped to remove that ignorance which causes a lack of Faith. All this truth must be imparted in charity, so that souls may be drawn to Christ. There are many men, who are not malicious, but have been led astray by bad associations with others, prejudice, evil advice and

example. These must be guided back to the one fold by apostolic preaching on fire with the love of God. Thus darkness will be dispelled from their minds, and their hearts will know peace.

Armed with a wise and saintly clergy and laity, the Church has a tremendous force for the reign of peace in the souls of men by the recapitulation of all things in Christ. She will be possessed of a staunch lay apostolate which will, under the direction of the hierarchy, bring Christ into every walk of life. Men and women leading more intense Christian lives will carry Christ to souls whom priests cannot contact directly.

This part of St. Pius X's program is a portent of a phase in the spiritual platform of another Pius. Our present Holy Father in his message to the parish priests and Lenten preachers of the Rome diocese this year, urged them to work toward the formation of a lay apostolate by restoring a more intense Christian life among the faithful. We need cite but a few passages to see the great affinity between this apostolic exhortation and St. Pius' first encyclical. Pope Pius XII rejoices over the progress in spiritual life that has already taken place in many parishes; still he must ask his priests to reflect with him and ask themselves: "For how many of your parishioners, for how many of the families in your parish is Jesus Christ a living reality?" After reminding them of their duty to do all in their power for the salvation of the souls in their care, he goes on to say: "From this there naturally follows, dear sons, the necessity of obtaining help, of finding collaborators capable of multiplying your strength and capacity, ready to supply for you where you do not succeed in penetrating." Herein lies the great importance of the lay apostolate. The Holy Father concludes: "Therefore it is necessary to find these souls in order to use them after they have been solidly trained." But what are some of the guiding principles in training them? "You will have particular care for the 'intellectual' formation of you collaborators, seeing to it especially that they have clear ideas as a result of a truly profound knowledge of religion. . . . But, above all, take care of their spiritual formation. *Have them put on Jesus Christ*; nourish them with Him; make of His Divine Heart a model from which they draw inspiration in their thoughts, their affections, their desires, their words and actions. Have them surrender their heart in Jesus *and in the arms of His Heavenly Mother Mary*." We see a similarity between St. Pius X, and Pope Pius XII, which goes far beyond the name.

The closing of the first encyclical letter, *E Supremi Apostolatus*, might be considered a prelude to the second. After exhorting his hearers to beg God for the restoration of the human race in Jesus

Christ through the merits of Christ, St. Pius continues: "Let us turn, too, to the most powerful intercession of the Divine Mother—to obtain which we, addressing this letter of ours to you on the day appointed especially for commemorating the Holy Rosary, ordain and confirm all our predecessor's prescriptions with regard to the dedication of the present month to the august Virgin by the public recitation of the Rosary in all churches."

The fiftieth anniversary of Pope Pius IX's solemn definition of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception was the occasion for St. Pius X's giving the world his second encyclical, "Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum," on February 2, 1904. We might say that this act added not a few golden pages to the spiritual autobiography begun by the first encyclical. His love for his heavenly Mother started with lessons learned from the mother of his earthly home. He used to take his playmates to the Shrine of the Madonna of Cendrole. His sermons of Our Lady drew many even from outside his parish at Salzano. As Bishop of Mantua he spoke to the seminarians almost daily on love of Our Lady. His veneration for the statue of Our Lady of Grace in the Cathedral of St. Mark, while Patriarch of Venice, was great. And now as the Vicar of Christ he consecrated his pontificate to the Mother of Christ. Amidst many labors he recited the Rosary daily. It was therefore with happy heart that such a devoted son declared a Jubilee in honor of his Mother. Here was an opportunity to lead all his own children to a greater love of Mary.

St. Pius leaves no doubt in the minds of his hearers about the hopeful intention behind this letter. "But the first and chief reason, Venerable Brethren, why the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception should excite a singular fervor in the souls of Christians lies for us in that restoration of all things in Christ, which we have already set forth in our first encyclical letter. For can anyone fail to see that *there is no surer or more direct road than by Mary for uniting all mankind in Christ* and obtaining through Him the perfect adoption of sons, that we may be holy and immaculate in the sight of God?" He is encouraged by several events since the definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854: even in addition to the secret gifts of grace God has given to the Church during this time, there has taken place the Vatican Council in which the dogma of Papal Infallibility was defined in time to meet the errors soon to show their ugly heads; many pilgrims have journeyed to Rome out of veneration for the Holy Father; and too there had been the miraculous manifestations at Lourdes.

But the real reason for his great confidence in Mary's interces-

sory power lies in her Divine Maternity. Since she conceived in her immaculate womb Him Who is Truth itself, Mary has an intimate share in the divine mysteries, and in a manner is their guardian. St. Pius then draws this conclusion concerning her sublime role in relation to the Church: ". . . upon her as upon a foundation, the noblest after Christ, rises the edifice of the faith of all centuries."

He now lays down the principle which is the basis of Mary's inseparability from Christ in the continued work of our redemption. ". . . since Divine Providence has been pleased that we should have the Man-God through Mary, who conceived Him by the Holy Ghost and bore Him in her womb, it only remains for us to receive Christ from the hands of Mary." When the saint points out to us that almost always Sacred Scripture prophesies the Grace of Christ by uniting Him with His Mother, his heart opens up in a canticle of praise. Here are only a few of its notes: "The Lamb that is to rule the world will be sent; but He will be sent from the rock of the desert. The flower will blossom; but it will blossom from the root of Jesse."

He dwells with delight upon Mary's intimate knowledge of her Son. The birth, childhood, and hidden life of Christ were hers to share so closely that "she may be said to have lived the very life of her Son." Therefore, who better than Mary can teach us the mystery of Christ?

Always mindful of the end in view, Saint Pius explicitly reminds his audience that Mary is the most powerful means of uniting mankind with Christ. She is the Mother of God, and also of men. For in giving birth to the Savior of mankind, she becomes the mother of redeemed humanity; in bringing forth the Head of the Mystical Body, she becomes the Mother of all the members. "Now the Blessed Virgin did not conceive the Eternal Son of God merely in order that He might be made man, taking His human nature from her, but also in order that *by means of the nature assumed from her* He might be the Redeemer of men."

Mary's close bond with Christ by no means ceases at His birth. She is intimately associated with Him in all His mysteries unto the death of the cross. "From this community of will and suffering between Christ and Mary 'she merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world' (Eadmeri Mon.) and Dispensatrix of all the gifts that Our Savior purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood."

Mary's close connection with the members of her Son's Mystical Body by no means ceased with her assumption into heaven. She is today the Mediatrix of all graces. St. Pius quotes St. Bernardine of

Siena who called Mary "the neck of our Head by which He communicated to His Mystical Body all spiritual gifts," and himself goes on to say: "since she surpassed all in holiness and union with Christ, and has been associated by Christ in the work of redemption . . . *she is the principal minister in the distribution of grace.*"

And so we have in our possession at least the main principles of St. Pius' program for a true and lasting peace. In short, the tranquillity of order among men can come only from the unity of all in, with, and through Christ. As our Head He poors down into us His members the life of His Grace, which is essentially the same as that sanctifying His own soul. He has willed that this Grace come to us through the hands of His Immaculate Mother, who is so intimately associated with our salvation. Therefore true peace cannot reign in the souls of men unless they are living by the life of Christ under Him as their King, and Mary their Mother and Queen.

St. Pius does not finish this letter without further extolling the glorious purity of Mary in her Immaculate Conception, and inviting all her children to imitate their Mother. The remainder of his fruitful Pontificate is a continuous striving to carry out his program. To mention only some of his other encyclicals and documents designed to achieve his most sublime goal: "Acerbo Nimis" (the teaching of Christian Doctrine, April 15, 1904); "Il Fermo Proposito" (Catholic Action in Italy, June 11, 1905); "Pascendi Dominice Gregis" (Modernism, September 8, 1907); "Singulari Quadam" (the labor organization in Germany, September 24, 1912); Motu Proprio's on the Restoration of Church Music (November 22, 1903), on Popular Christian Action (December 18, 1903); Decree on frequent and daily reception of Holy Communion (December 20, 1905); Apostolic letter on the study of Sacred Scripture, (March 27, 1906); Apostolic Exhortation on the Priesthood (August 4, 1908).

In no wise was St. Pius X's influence on the apostolate limited to his own life time. During this Marian Year we read in the present Holy Father's encyclical letter *Fulgens Corona* the same ardent desire that the Intercession of Our Lady will bring peace to the world. Therefore it is the continuation of the same fundamental program of "reheading" all things in Christ through Mary. Pope Pius XII, who also beatified Pius X in 1951, closed his beatification address with a prayer to the Blessed Pontiff. At the end of this prayer, he implores his heavenly aid in working toward the goal close to the hearts of both: "Obtain from the Divine Mercy the gift of lasting peace, and, as harbinger of that, the return of men's minds to the spirit of true brotherhood which alone can bring to all nations the justice and concord willed by God. Amen."