EN

NON ABBIAMO BISOGNO

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS XI
ON CATHOLIC ACTION IN ITALY
TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHREN THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES,
ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS, AND OTHER ORDINARIES
IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

We do not need to acquaint you, Venerable Brethren, with the events which have recently occurred in this Our Episcopal city of Rome, and throughout Italy, that is to say, in the very territory of which We are Primate - events which have had such a wide and deep repercussion especially in all the dioceses of Italy and throughout the Catholic world. These occurrences can be summarized in very few and very sad words. An attempt has been made to strike a mortal blow at that which was and always will be dearest to Our heart as Father and as Shepherd of Souls; and We can - indeed We must - add that "the way in which it has been done offends Us still more." (*E al modo ancor m'offende.*)

2. In the presence and under the pressure of these events; We feel the need and the duty of turning to you, Venerable Brethren, and of, so to speak, visiting each one of you in spirit; first, to discharge Our urgent duty of fraternal gratitude, and, second, to satisfy another duty equally grave and urgent. We mean the duty of defending truth and justice in a matter which, inasmuch as it affects vital interests and rights of Holy Mother Church, concerns all and every one of you, Venerable Brethren, whom the Holy Ghost has called to govern the Church in union with Ourselves. In the third place We wish to tell you of Our anxieties for the future. Fourth, We would lay before you the conclusions and reflections forced upon Us by these events; and, finally, We invite you to share Our hopes and to pray with Us and with the Catholic world that they may be fulfilled.

3. Interior peace, that peace which comes from the full and clear consciousness that one is arrayed on the side of truth and justice and is striving and suffering for them: that peace, which only God can give and which the world can neither give nor take away: that blessed and beneficent peace, thanks to the divine goodness and mercy, has never left Us; and we have full trust that it never will leave Us, come what may. Yet this peace leaves the way open to the most bitter trials. During the Passion, it was so with the Heart of Jesus, and it is so in the hearts of His faithful servants, as well you know, Venerable Brethren; and We also have experienced the truth of those mysterious words: "Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter" (*Isaias* xxxviii, 17).

4. Your prompt, generous and affectionate intervention which does not cease, Venerable Brethren, the fraternal and filial devotion which you have expressed and, above all else, that sentiment of high supernatural solidarity, that intimate union of thoughts and of feelings, of intellects and wills, which your loving messages breathe forth, have filled Our soul with inexpressible consolations and have called forth from Our hearts to Our lips the words of the psalm (xciii, 19): "According to the multitude of sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul."

5. For all these consolations, after God, it is you We thank, Venerable Brethren, you to whom We can say, as Jesus Christ said to your predecessors, the Apostles: "And you are they who have continued with Me in My temptations" (*Luke* xxii, 28). And in expressing Our gratitude to you, we wish also to perform the duty, most sweet to Our paternal heart, of thanking those multitudes of good and worthy children, who separately and collectively, as individuals and as members of various organizations and associations (especially the Associations of Catholic Action and of Catholic Youth), have sent Us so many and such affectionate tributes of devotion and sympathy, and of generous and practical conformity with Our directions and Our desires. It has been for us an exquisite satisfaction to see the Catholic Action organizations of all countries, both near and far, united round the common Father, inspired by a single spirit of faith, of filial sorrow and of generous impulses, all expressing their astonishment and grief in seeing Catholic Action societies persecuted and assailed here, in the very centre of the Apostolic Hierarchy, where its *raison d'etre* is strongest. Here in Italy, as in all parts of the world where Catholic Action exists, Catholic Action is true to its solemn and authentic definition. Obeying Our watchful and assiduous instructions (which you, Venerable Brethren, have so largely seconded), it does not wish to be nor can be anything other than "the participation and the collaboration of the laity with the Apostolic Hierarchy."

6. You will convey, Venerable Brethren, the expression of Our paternal appreciation to all your children in Christ - they are also Ours - who have shown themselves such good pupils of your schools and so good and pious towards their common Father as to inspire us to exclaim, "I abound exceedingly with joy in all our tribulation" (II *Corinthians* vii, 4).

7. And to you, Bishops of each and every diocese in this dear Italy, We owe gratitude for the consolations which you have nobly vied with one another in giving Us by your letters which you lavished upon us during the entire month just ended, and especially by your telegrams, so eloquent and so affectionate, on the feast-day of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. But We, in Our own turn, must send you condolences on account of what each one of you has suffered in seeing gardens of souls which the Holy Ghost has entrusted to your care and which you had tended with such loving zeal, suddenly swept by a devastating tempest. Your hearts, Venerable Brethren, immediately turned to Our own, to suffer with us in Our afflictions; because you perceived that Our heart was as a centre in which all your suffering hearts met and converged and joined. You have manifested this sentiment to Us in clear unmistakable and affectionate ways, for which We thank you all, from the depths of Our heart. Particularly appreciative are We of the unanimous and most satisfactory and convincing proofs which you have brought to Us that the Italian Catholic Action societies, especially the Catholic Youth Associations, have remained docile and faithful to Our instructions and yours in refraining absolutely from any and every kind of party-political activity. And together with you, We express Our thanks to all your priests, to the members of religious communities, and to your laity, who have united themselves with you in so fine a shewing of faith and filial piety. And in a special way We thank your Catholic Associations and chiefly the organizations of the young, down through all their groups, even to the smallest boys and girls. The smaller they are the dearer they are, and it is in their prayers that We confidently repose our trust.

8. You have understood well, Venerable Brethren, that Our heart was and is with you, with each one of you, with you and for you in sufferings, with you and for you in prayers, beseeching God in His infinite mercy to come to our assistance, and to draw new blessings and great blessings from this great evil which the ancient enemy of Good has unloosed.

9. Having thus satisfied the debt of gratitude for the consolations which We have received in Our affliction, We must now satisfy also that obligation which Our Apostolic Ministry imposes on Us as a debt to truth and justice.

10. Already on several occasions, Venerable Brethren, in the most solemn and explicit manner and assuming entire responsibility for what We were saying, We have protested against the campaign of false and unjust accusations which preceded the disbanding of the Associations of the young people and of the University students affiliated to Catholic Action. It was a disbanding which was carried out in such a way and by such methods as to give the impression that action was being taken against a vast and dangerous organization of criminals, although the young men and young women involved are certainly some of the best among the good, concerning whom We are happy and paternally proud to pay tribute still once more. It is noteworthy that even among the officers of the law charged to carry out these orders of suppression, there were many who were ill at ease and showed by their expressions and courtesies that they were almost asking pardon for obeying peremptory orders. We have appreciated the delicate feelings of these officers and We have reserved for them a special blessing.

11. But, in sad contrast with the manner of acting of these officials, how many acts of brutality and of violence there have been, even to the striking of blows and the drawing of blood! How many insults in the press, how many injurious words and acts against things and persons not excluding Ourself, have preceded, accompanied and followed the carrying into effect of this lightning-like police-order which in many instances either through ignorance or malicious zeal, was extended to include associations and organizations not contemplated in the superior orders, such as the oratories of the little ones and the sodalities of the Children of Mary. And all this sad accompaniment of irreverences and of violences took place in the presence of and with the participation of members of a political party, some of whom were in uniform, and were carried into effect with such a unison of action throughout all Italy and with such a passive acquiescence on the part of the civil authorities and the police as to make one necessarily suspect that some supreme authority had issued an instruction. It is easy to admit, and it was equally easy to have foreseen, that the limits of these directions could and would have, almost necessarily, been exceeded. We must needs refer to these painful and distasteful things, because there has been an attempt made to have the public and the world at large believe that the disbanding of the associations which are so dear to Us took place without incidents and almost as if it were a normal proceeding.

12. But there have been other attacks on truth and justice on a larger scale. The inventions, falsehoods and real calumnies diffused by the hostile press of the party, which is the only press which is free to say and to dare to say anything and is often ordered or almost ordered what it must say, were largely summarized in a message which was cautiously characterized as unofficial and yet was broadcast to the general public by the most powerful means of diffusion which exist at present.

13. The history of the documents prepared not in the service of truth, but in contempt of truth and of justice is a long and sad story. But we must affirm, with deep dismay, that in Our many years of active life as a librarian We have rarely seen an article so tendencious and so contrary to truth and justice in its references to this Holy See, to Italian Catholic Action, and particularly to the Associations which have been so harshly treated. If We should be silent and if We should not contradict these things - that is to say if We should permit them to be believed - We should be much more unworthy than We already are to occupy this august Apostolic chair; We should be unworthy of the filial and generous devotion which has always consoled Us and now more than ever consoles Us, that devotion of our dear children of Catholic Action, and especially of those dear sons and dear daughters - and, thanks be to God, they are numerous - who, because of religious loyalty to Our invitations and directions, have suffered so much and are still suffering, thereby the more greatly honouring the school in which they have been reared and honouring also their Divine Master and His unworthy Vicar. They have borne such glorious witness by their Christian conduct, even in the face of threats and of violences that there is no doubt on which side real dignity of character, true strength of mind, real courage, and education are displayed.

14. We shall try to be as brief as possible in correcting the facile assertions of the above mentioned ["wireless"] message, and We say "facile" in order not to be obliged to say impudent. Its authors imagined that the majority of the public would have no possibility of controlling its accuracy. We shall be brief also, because many times, especially of late, We have spoken on questions which now come up again, and Our words have reached you, Venerable Brethren, and through you they have reached also Our dear children in Jesus Christ, as We trust also Our words will reach them in this present letter.

15. Among other things, the above mentioned ["wireless"] message stated that the revelations of the hostile press of the party had been almost completely confirmed, at least in substance, by the *Osservatore Romano* itself. The truth is that the *Osservatore Romano* has, time after time, proved that the so-called revelations were either fabrications, or at least false in their interpretations of simple facts. It is sufficient to read without bad faith and with the modest capacity to understand.

16. The message further stated that it was ridiculous to try to make the Holy See appear as a victim in a country where thousands of travellers can testify to the respect shown towards priests, prelates, the Church and religious functions. Yes, Venerable Brethren, the attempt unfortunately would be ridiculous, just as it would be ridiculous to break through an open door; because unhappily thousands of visitors who always abound in Italy and in Rome have sadly observed the irreverences, oftentimes of an impious and blasphemous character, and the acts of violence and vandalism committed against places, things and persons throughout the country and in Our very episcopal city; acts which have been repeatedly deplored by Us after We had had sure and precise information about them.

17. The message denounces the "black ingratitude" of the priests, who are against the party which has been (so the message says) the guarantee of religious liberty throughout all Italy. The clergy, the Bishops, and this Holy See have never failed to acknowledge everything that has been done during all these years for the benefit and advantage of religion; indeed, they have on many occasions expressed their genuine and sincere appreciation. But We and the Bishops and the Clergy and all the faithful - in fact all citizens desirous of peace and order - have worried and suffered and are worrying and suffering in the presence of the systematic campaign all too quickly begun against the most reasonable and precious liberties of religion and of consciences such as were the attacks on Catholic Action, and its different associations, especially those of the young. These attacks had their culmination in the police measures taken against the organizations, and in the manner to which We have already alluded. They were attacks and measures such as to lead one seriously to doubt whether the former benevolences and favours were indeed actuated by a sincere love and zeal for religion, or whether they were not rather due to pure calculation and to an ultimate goal of domination. And if the question of ingratitude is to be considered, it should be rather the ingratitude now shown towards the Holy See by a party and by a regime which, in the opinion of the whole world, from the fact of establishing friendly relations with the Holy See, both gained a prestige and a credit in the country and outside it, which some people, both in and out of Italy, considered excessive, inasmuch as they deemed the favours on Our part too great, and the trust and confidence which We reposed too full.

18. The police measures having been put into extreme effect with their accompaniments and consequences of acts of violence and of irreverence - acts which were unfortunately acquiesced in and connived at by the guardians of public order - We suspended the mission of Our Cardinal Legate to the centenary celebration in Padua as well as the festive processions in Rome and in Italy. Such a decision was clearly within Our competence, and We saw such grave and urgent reasons for it that it became a duty, although We were aware that this action would require heavy sacrifices on the part of the good people, and would cause perhaps a greater pain to Ourself than to any other. How could the usual joyful and solemn festivals be held in the midst of such grief and sorrow as that which had struck the paternal heart of the common Father of all the faithful and the maternal heart of Holy Mother Church, in Rome, in Italy, and indeed in all the Catholic world, as became immediately plain from the truly worldwide manifestation, with you at its head, Venerable Brethren, of sadness and of sympathy? And how could We be otherwise than afraid for the respect and the safety of persons and of things most sacred when We were obliged to take into consideration the attitude of public authorities and officers of the law in the presence of so many irreverent and violent acts? Everywhere whither the news of Our decision went, the good priests and people displayed identical ideas and similar sentiments, and wherever they were not intimidated, or worse, they gave magnificent and for Us most consoling proofs of loyalty and grief substituting for the festive observances holy hours and prayer, adoration and of reparation in union with the sorrowing heart of the Holy Father. His intentions were prayed for in great gatherings of the people.

19. We know what happened in those places where Our instructions did not arrive in time. "With the participation of the authorities," as the message reveals, some procession took place. But those "authorities" of the Government and of the party were the selfsame persons who had already assisted or were about to assist, silently and inactively, at definitely anti-Catholic and decidely anti-religious acts - which is something the message does not say. The message, on the contrary, asserts that there were local ecclesiastical authorities who considered themselves in a position "to pay no heed" to Our prohibition. We do not know of any single local ecclesiastical authority who deserves the insult and the affront implied in those words. We do know, however, and we strongly deplored the impositions, the threats, and the acts of force used or allowed to be used against local ecclesiastical authorities. We know of impious parodies of sacred processions, all of which were permitted to take place to the profound sorrow of the faithful and to the great amazement of those citizens who, desiring peace and order, were obliged to behold both peace and order undefended and even worse than undefended by those very persons who have both the solemn duty of defending them and a vital interest in doing so.

20. The message reiterates the argument which has been so often used in drawing a contrast between the situation in Italy and in other countries where the Church is really persecuted - "countries against which there have never been heard words spoken so strong as the words pronounced against Italy where religion has been restored." We have already said that We conserve, and shall still conserve a remembrance and an enduring gratitude for what has been done in Italy for the welfare of religion, a gratitude not lessened by the fact that contemporaneously, a not less and perhaps greater benefit has occurred therefrom the party and to the regime We have stated and have repeated that it is not necessary (and would indeed oftentimes be decidedly injurious to the ends desired) that everything should be heard and known which We and this Holy See through Our representatives and through Our brothers in the episcopate, have to say and have to remonstrate wherever the interests of religion demand it, and in the measure which, in our judgment, the situation indicates, especially in those places where the Church is really persecuted.

21. And it was with a grief inexpressible that We saw a real and a true persecution break out in this Our Italy and in this very city of Rome against that which the Church and its head have characterized as most precious and dear to them from the standpoint of liberty and of right. Liberty and right are the heritage of souls and especially of the souls of the young, entrusted to the Church in a particular way by the Divine Creator and Redeemer.

22. As is well known, We have repeatedly and solemnly affirmed and protested that Catholic Action, both from its very nature and essence ("the participation and the collaboration of the laity with the Apostolic Hierarchy") and by our precise and categorical directions and orders is outside and above all party politics. We have also affirmed and protested Our conviction that in Italy Our directions and orders have been faithfully obeyed and followed. The message says: "The assertion that Catholic Action has not had a true political character is absolutely false." On the discourtesy of these words We will not enlarge: and, if the case were not so lamentable We should treat as ridiculous the untruthfulness and flippancy of what follows. Catholic Action, says the message, is a political party because it has banners, badges, identification cards and all the other external forms of a political party. But banners, badges, identification cards and other similar external appurtenances are today the most common things in every country of the world for the most varied kind of associations and activities which have nothing, and wish to have nothing, in common with politics, such as sports and professional organizations, civil and military clubs, commercial and industrial groups, and even school children, such as those organized exclusively in a religious way like the little ones who belong to the Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament.

23. The message itself betrays a consciousness of its own weakness and futility; and, hastening to save its argument, it adds three other reasons. The first reason is that the heads of Catholic Action were almost to a man members or heads of the Popular Party, which was one of the strongest opponents of Fascismo. This accusation has been launched many times against Catholic Action, but always in a general way and without specifying any names. Whenever We have asked for precise data and for names, it has been in vain. Only a short time before police measures were taken against Catholic Action, and in evident preparation for them, the hostile press, having no less evidently, access to police reports, had published a series of alleged facts and names which are the pretended revelations referred to in the beginning of the message. These the *Osservatore Romano* duly denied and corrected, instead of "confirming" them, as the message asserts, in an attempt to mystify and deceive the public.

24. As for Ourselves, we already possessed, Venerable Brethren, information gathered long ago, as well as the results of a personal enquiry. Still, We felt it was Our new investigations. Here are the positive results. First of all, we have found out that while the Popular Party was still in existence and before the new [Fascist] party had asserted itself, it was decreed in 1919 that no one who had occupied a position of responsibility in the Popular Party could at the same time hold any directive office in Catholic Action. We have also found out, Venerable Brethren, that the cases of local ex-directors in the Popular Party who had subsequently become local directors in Catholic Action consist of four. We say four; and this infinitesimal number must be considered in the light of the fact that there are 250 diocesan committees, 4,000 sections of Catholic men, and more than 5,000 circles of Catholic youth. And we must add that in the four above cited instances the individuals concerned have never given any occasion for objection. Some of them are now sympathisers with the regime and the [Fascist] party, and are favourably regarded thereby.

25. And We do not wish to omit mentioning another guarantee that Catholic Action abstains from politics, a reason well known to the Bishops of Italy. Catholic Action has been, is, and will always be, dependent upon the episcopate, under your direction, under you who have always assigned ecclesiastical assistants and have nominated the presidents of the diocesan committees. Whence it is clear that in trusting and recommending to you, Venerable Bishops, these Associations which have been assailed, We have not ordered and disposed anything substantially new. When the Popular Party was dissolved and passed out of existence, those who formerly belonged to Catholic Action continued to belong to Catholic Action, and they submitted themselves with perfect discipline to the fundamental law of Catholic Action, that is, abstention from every political activity. So did all those who on that occasion asked to be received as members. And with what justice and charity could all these people have been expelled or not admitted to Catholic Action when they possessed the necessary qualifications required by the Constitutions? The regime and the party which seem to attribute such a fearful and feared strength to those who belong to the Popular Party for political reasons, should show themselves grateful to Catholic Action, which removed them precisely from that sphere and required them to make a formal pledge not to carry out any political activities, but to limit themselves to religious action.

26. We, Church, religion, faithful Catholics (and not We alone), We cannot be grateful to him who, after putting out of existence Socialism and antireligious organizations (Our enemies, but not Ours only), has permitted them to be so largely re-introduced that the whole world sees and deplores them. They have been made even more strong and dangerous than before, inasmuch as they are now dissembled and also protected by their new uniform.
The message asserts that Catholic Action was organized in a political way, and that it had nothing to do with "religious education and propaganda of the faith." Leaving aside the incompetent and confused manner in which the purposes of Catholic Action are thus described, all those who know and live the life of today will grant that there is no sort of initiative or activity, from the more spiritual and scientific bodies to the more material and mechanical ones, which does not find the necessity of organization and of organized action. And the fact that an organization exists does not mean from that very fact that the end and purpose of the organization is political.

27. "However," continues the message, "the strongest argument that can be used as justification for the destruction of the Catholic circles of Youth is the defence of the State, which is no more than the simple duty of every Government." There is no doubt of the solemnity and the vital importance of such a duty and of such a right. The first right is to do one's duty. But the receivers and readers of the message would have smiled with incredulity or wondered greatly if the message had added what is also true: that of the Catholic circles of youth which were the objects of the police-measure, 10,000 were, or rather actually are, composed of girls and young women, with a total membership of about 500,000. Who can find a serious danger and a real threat to the security of the State in this? And it must be added that only 220,000 are inscribed as "effective members," More than 100,000 are little "aspirants," and more than 150,000 still smaller children, called "Benjamins."

28. There still remain the circles of the Catholic young men, that same Catholic Youth which in the publications of the youth of the [Fascist] party are represented and held up to ridicule and scorn (with what sense of pedagogical responsibility, to say only this, anyone may see) as a swarm of "rabbits," only fit to carry candles and to recite rosaries in sacred processions. This perhaps explains why they have been in these recent days so many times, and with such ignobility on the part of their assailants, attacked and maltreated even to the shedding of blood, and left undefended by those who could and should protect them. If it were not for the harmlessness and peaceableness for which they have been sneered at, would their persecutors (sometimes armed) have dared to fall upon them?

29. If here is the strongest argument for the attempted "destruction" (the word does not leave any doubt about the intentions) of the heroic and noble associations of young men of Catholic Action, you will see, Venerable Brethren, that We could and should congratulate Ourselves on Our position, since the incredible absurdity of this argument is very clear. But unfortunately We are obliged to repeat that "iniquity hath lied to itself" (*Psalms* xxvi, 12), and that the strongest argument for the desired destruction must be sought in another field, for the battle which now is waging is not political, but moral and religious - essentially moral and religious.

30. It is necessary to close one's eyes to this truth and to set going the imagination in order to find politics where there is nothing but religion and morals, and to conclude, as does the message, that the absurd situation has been created of a strong organization at the orders of a "Foreign Power, the Vatican, a thing which no Government in this world would have permitted."

31. The documents of all the centres of Catholic Action have been sequestered "en masse." Correspondence that could be suspected to have some relation to the Associations affected, or even with those not affected, such as the oratories, continues to be intercepted and sequestered. Tell Us, therefore, tell the country, tell the world, what document and how many of them there are, which treat of politics woven and directed by Catholic Action with all this peril to the State! We venture to say that none such will be found, unless they are read and interpreted in accordance with preconceived and unfair ideas, which are contradicted fully by facts and by evidence and by numberless proofs and witnesses. If and when there are any genuine documents found that are worthy of consideration, We shall be the first to take them seriously. But what fair-minded man will wish, for example, to charge a person with political activities and political actions dangerous to the State merely for making some complaint or deploring the harsh treatment inflicted so many times and in so many places on the Catholic Action Associations even previous to the time of these latest outbreaks?

32. On the contrary, there will be found among the sequestered documents proofs and evidences literally numberless of the profound and consistent religious character and of religious activity of all Catholic Action, and particularly so of the Associations of Youth and of University students. It will be sufficient to know and to read as We ourselves have done countless times the programmes, the reports, the proceedings of Congresses or "weeks" of religious study and of prayer, of spiritual exercises, and the frequenting of the Sacraments practised and promoted, of conferences in explanation of religion, of studies, of catechetical and apologetical activities, of cooperation in true and pure Christian charity, in conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, and in many other ways, such as zealous work for the missionaries abroad.

33. In the presence of such facts and of such a documentation, with an eye and a hand on the reality of things, We say, as We have always said, that to accuse Italian Catholic Action of engaging in politics is a real and true calumny. The facts have demonstrated what was the real target aimed at when Catholic Action was struck, and what was the thing that was being prepared. Rarely has the fable of the wolf and the lamb been exemplified so strikingly; and history will recall it.

34. We, certain on the point of being concerned with and restricting Ourselves to the field of religion, have never been able to believe that We could be considered as a "foreign power," especially by Catholics and by Italian Catholics. And thanks to this apostolic power which is now, unworthy though We be, entrusted by God to Us, the good Catholics of all the world consider Rome as the second country of each and every one of them. It is not so long ago that a statesman, who will remain certainly among the world's most celebrated men, a man neither a Catholic nor a friend of Catholicism, in a full political assembly said that he could not consider as a foreign power that authority which twenty million Germans revered, honoured and obeyed. To say then that "no Government of the world would have permitted the continuance of the situation created in Italy by the existence of Catholic Action" it is necessary absolutely to ignore and to forget that in all other States of the world, as far as China, Catholic Action exists and lives, and the organizations frequently resemble even to the smallest details the Italian Catholic Action. In some countries the organization is even more highly developed than in Italy. In no State of the world has Catholic Action been so hatefully treated, so truly persecuted (We do not see what other word conforms to the reality of the truth of the situation) as in this, Our Italy, and in this, Our episcopal seat of Rome. An "absurd situation" indeed exists, but it has been created against Us, not by Us.

35. We have assumed a heavy and tedious task. But it has seemed to Us a definite duty of charity and of paternal justice. In this spirit We have fulfilled our purpose of putting in their true light various facts and truths, which some children of Ours (perhaps through incomplete knowledge) had distorted and placed in a false light, causing harm to Our other children.

36. There is one first consideration and conclusion. From all which We have explained and still more from the events themselves as they have been evolving, it results that the so-called political activity of Catholic Action, the alleged manifest or disguised hostility of some of its partisans against the regime and the party, as well as its being also "the eventual refuge and haven of those refugees who, up to the present, have been spared" by the regime because they have sheltered under the banner of Catholic Action itself is only a pretext. That which was desired and that which has been attempted is to tear away from Catholic Action and, through this process, to tear away from the Church the young - *all* the young. So true is this, that after all the talk about Catholic Action, aim was taken only at the Associations of the young. Nor were these attacks limited to Associations of the young affiliated to Catholic Action. Rough hands were laid upon Associations of a simply devotional character, upon works of pure piety and of primary catechetical nature, such as sodalities of the children of Mary and patronages. So far did this go that in many cases the grossness of the acts was recognized by the perpetrators themselves as a blunder.

37. This essential point is abundantly confirmed from various sources. It is confirmed first of all by many antecedent statements made by personalities more or less responsible and also by persons representative of the regime and of the party and which have had their complete commentary and definite confirmation in the latest events.

38. This confirmation is made all the more explicit and categorical, We were almost about to say solemn and violent, by the individual who not only represents all, but who can do all, and who confirms it in official or quasi-official publications dedicated to the young, in interviews and in articles to be published abroad before they are published in Italy, and also, up to this very moment, by messages and by communications to representatives of the press.

39. Another reflection immediately and inevitably present itself. No attention has been paid to Our oft-repeated assurances and Our protests. There has been no attention paid to your protests and assurances, Venerable Brethren, concerning the true nature of Catholic Action and its work, and concerning the sacred inviolable rights of souls and of the Church.

40. We say "the sacred and inviolable rights of souls and of the Church," and this is the reflection which concerns Us more than any other, being the more grave. Again and again, as is well known, We have expressed Our thought - or rather the thought of Holy Church - on these important and essential matters, and it is not to you, Venerable Brothers and faithful masters in Israel that it is necessary to say more. But we must add something for the benefit of those dear people committed to your care whom, as shepherds of souls you nourish and govern by divine mandate and who would hardly ever be able in these days, save for you, to know the thoughts of the common Father of their souls. We repeat: "The sacred and inviolable rights of souls are of the Church"; because this matter concerns the right of souls to procure for themselves the greatest spiritual work of the Church, the divinely appointed and so mandatory of this teaching and of this work in that supernatural order which is established in the blood of the Redeemer and is necessary and obligatory for all of us if we are to share in the divine redemption. It concerns the right of souls so formed to share the treasures of the redemption with other souls, thus participating in the activities of the Apostolic Hierarchy.

41. It was in consideration of this double right of souls that We lately declared Ourselves happy and proud to wage the good fight for the liberty of consciences. No indeed (as someone, perhaps inadvertently, has represented Us as saying) for "the liberty of conscience, which is an equivocal expression too often distorted to mean the absolute independence of conscience and therefore an absurdity in reference to a soul created and redeemed by God.

42. Besides, there is involved another right of the Church equally inviolable - the right to fulfil the imperative Divine Commission entrusted to her by her Divine Founder, to bring to souls, to bring to every soul, and the treasures of truth and of good, doctrinal and practical, which He Himself brought to the world. "Going therefore teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (*Matthew* xxviii, 19, 20).

43. How great is the importance of childhood and adolescence in this absolute universality and totality of the divine mandate to the Church, has been shown by the Divine Master Himself, the Creator and Redeemer of souls, by His example and particularly by those memorable words which are also so formidable: "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to Me . . . who believe in Me, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. . . whose angels always behold the face of the Father who is in Heaven. Woe to that man who shall scandalize one of these little ones!" (*Math*. xix, 13; xviii, 1, et seq).

44. And here We find Ourselves confronted by a mass of authentic affirmations and no less authentic facts which reveal beyond the slightest possibility of doubt the resolve (already in great measure actually put into effect) to monopolize completely the young, from their tenderest years up to manhood and womanhood, for the exclusive advantage of a party and of a regime based on an ideology which clearly resolves itself into a true, a real pagan worship of the State - the "Statolatry" which is no less in contrast with the natural rights of the family than it is in contradiction with the supernatural rights of the Church. To propose and to promote such a monopoly to persecute for this reason Catholic Action, as has been done for some time more or less openly or under cover to reach this end by striking at the Catholic Association of Youth as has lately been done; all this is truly and literally to "forbid the little children to go to Jesus Christ," since it impedes their access to His Church and where His Church is, there is Jesus Christ. This usurpation goes so far as to snatch the young from Christ and His Church even with violence.

45. The Church of Jesus Christ has never contested the rights and the duties of the State concerning the education of its citizens; indeed, We Ourselves have recalled and proclaimed them in Our recent Encyclical Letter on the "Christian Education of Youth." Such rights and duties are unchallengeable as long as they remain within the limits of the State's proper competency, a competence which in its turn is clearly indicated and determined by the role of the State, a role which, though certainly not only bodily and material, is by its very nature limited to the natural, the terrestrial and the temporal.

46. The universal and divine mandate with which the Church of Jesus Christ has been incommunicably and exclusively commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself, extends to the supernatural, the celestial, the eternal and to that order of things which on the one hand is of the strictest obligation for every rational creature and which, on the other hand, must, by the very nature of things, subordinate, co-ordinate to itself all else.

47. The Church of Jesus Christ is certainly acting within her mandate, not only when She puts into souls the first indispensable beginnings and elements of supernatural life, but also when She watches over the growth of this supernatural life according to the opportunities and the capacities, and in the way and by the means, which She deems suitable, even to the extent of preparing capable and efficient collaboration with the Apostolic Hierarchy. It was Jesus Christ Himself who made the solemn declaration that He came in order that souls might have not only some beginning or some element of supernatural life, but that they might have it in abundance. "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (*John* x. 10).

48. It was Jesus Christ Himself who laid the first foundations of Catholic Action, by choosing and educating the apostles and disciples as fellow workers in His Divine Apostolate. And His example was at once followed by the first Holy Apostles as the sacred text itself proves.

49. Therefore it is an unjustifiable pretention and is, indeed, irreconcilable with the name and the profession of being a Catholic, to come to teach the Church and her Head what is sufficient and what must be sufficient for the education and Christian formation of souls and for promoting, especially among the young, the application of the principles of the Faith in social life. To this unjustifiable presumption is added very clear evidence of the absolute incompetence of the pretenders and their complete ignorance of the matters under discussion. Recent events must have opened the public eyes, since they have shown beyond dispute that instead of saving true religion and saving Christian and civil education, their work has ended rather in disruption and destruction.

50. You know, Venerable Brethren, Bishops of Italy, from your pastoral experience that it is a grave and disastrous error to believe and to make believe that the work of the Church done by Catholic Action and through Catholic Action is superseded and made superfluous by the religious instruction given in the schools and by the presence of chaplains in the Associations of Youth of the [Fascist] party and of the regime. Both are certainly necessary. Without them the schools and the Associations would inevitably and quickly become, by logical and psychological necessity, pagan things. Necessary therefore they are; but they are not sufficient. As a matter of fact, by such religious instruction and such ecclesiastical assistance from the chaplains, the Church of Jesus Christ can develop only a minimum of her spiritual and supernatural effectiveness, and even this minimum is attained amid surroundings and in an environment which do not depend on the Church but are preoccupied by many other kinds of teaching matters and by many other exercises in obedience to immediate superiors who are often little or not at all favourably disposed to religion, and who sometimes exercise a directly contrary influence both by their words and by the example of their lives.

51. We have said that recent events have proved beyond the shadow of doubt that a few years have been sufficient to cause the loss and the destruction of the true religious sentiment and of education. We do not say of Christian, but simply of moral and of civil education. We have seen in action a species of religion which rebels against the directions of higher religious authorities and enjoins or encourages the nonobservance of these directions; an attitude towards religion which becomes persecution and which tries to destroy all that the supreme Head of the religion is known to prize and cherish most; a feeling which permits itself and provokes others to speak insulting words and do injurious things against the person of the Father of all the faithful, even to the extent of shouting, "Down with the Pope!" and "Death to Him!" which is an apprenticeship to parricide. Such a sham of religion cannot in any way be reconciled with Catholic doctrine and practice, but is something which must be considered contrary to both. The contradiction is most grave in itself and most destructive when it not only consists of external actions perpetrated and carried into effect, but when it also proclaims its principles and its maxims as the fundamentals of a social system.

52. A conception of the State which makes the rising generations belong to it entirely, without any exception, from the tenderest years up to adult life, cannot be reconciled by a Catholic either with Catholic doctrine or with the natural rights of the family. It is not possible for a Catholic to accept the claim that the Church and the Pope must limit themselves to the external practices of religion (such as Mass and the Sacraments), and that all the rest of education belongs to the State.

53. The erroneous and false doctrines and maxims that We have just pointed out and deplored have cropped up many times during these last few years, and it is well known that We have never, with God's help, done any less than Our apostolic duty in exposing them and in confronting them with the just claims of true Catholic doctrine, and with the inviolable rights of the Church of Jesus Christ and of the souls redeemed by His precious Blood.

54. But notwithstanding the opinions and forecasts and suggestions which have come to Us from many sources worthy of the greatest consideration, We have always refrained from formal and explicit condemnations, and have even gone so far as to believe possible and to favour compatibilities and cooperations which, to others, seemed inadmissible. We have done this because We thought, or rather We hoped, in the possibility that We had to deal only with exaggerated assertions and actions which were sporadic and with elements which were not sufficiently representative - in other words, with assertions and actions which called for no more than the censure of their individual authors, or which had come out of exceptional circumstances. We did not conclude that they were the expression of a programme properly so called.

55. The latest events and the assertions which preceded these events, accompanied them, and interpreted them, take away from Us this fondly held supposition. Therefore We must say, and do hereby say, that he is a Catholic only in name and by baptism (in contradiction to the obligations of that name and to the baptismal promises) who adopts and develops a programme with doctrines and maxims so opposed to the rights of the Church of Jesus Christ and of souls, and who also misrepresents, combats and persecutes Catholic Action which, as is universally known, the Church and its Head regard as very dear and precious.

56. You ask us, Venerable Brethren, in view of what has taken place, what is to be thought about the formula of the oath, which even little boys and girls are obliged to take, that they will execute orders without discussion from an authority which, as we have seen and experienced, can give orders against all truth and justice and in disregard of the rights of the Church and its souls, which are already by their very nature sacred and inviolable. Takers of this oath must swear to serve with all their strength, even to the shedding of blood, the cause of a revolution which snatches the young from the Church and from Jesus Christ, and which inculcates in its own young people hatred, violence and irreverence without respecting (as recent occurrences have superabundantly proved) even the person of the Pope.

57. When the question is posed in such terms, the answer from the Catholic point of view, as well as from a simply human point of view, is inevitably only one, and We, Venerable Brethren, do not wish to do otherwise than confirm the answer already given. Such an oath, as it stands, is unlawful.

58. Faced as We are by grave anxieties, which We know are also yours, Venerable Brethren, especially those of you who are Bishops in Italy, We are preoccupied first of all by the fact that so many of our children, young boys and girls, are inscribed and have taken membership with that oath. We deeply pity so many consciences tortured by doubts (torments and doubts concerning which We have incontrovertible evidence) precisely because of that oath as it has been interpreted, especially after the recent occurrences.

59. Realizing the many difficulties of the present hour and knowing that membership in the party and the oath are for countless persons a necessary condition of their career, of their daily bread, and even of their life itself, We have sought to find a way which would restore tranquillity to these consciences, reducing to a minimum the external difficulties of the situation. It seems to Us that such a means for those who have already received the membership card would be to make for themselves before God, in their own consciences, a reservation such as "Saving the laws of God and of the Church" or "In accordance with the duties of a good Christian," with the firm proposal to declare also externally such a reservation if the need of it arose.

60. We would desire that Our prayer may move those chiefs of the party who decide its policy and give the orders. It is the prayer of a Father who is jealous for the consciences of so many of his children. Let the reservation just mentioned be included in the oath-formula. Better still, let the oath be dropped, seeing that an oath is an act of religion and that it is out of place on the membership-cards of a political party.

61. We have tried to speak with calm and with serenity and also with all clarity. However, We cannot be otherwise than concerned that We be well understood - We do not say by you, Venerable Brethren, who are always and now more than ever so united to Us in thoughts and in sentiments - but by everyone.

62. In everything that We have said up to the present, We have not said that We wished to condemn the [Fascist] party as such. Our aim has been to point out and to condemn all those things in the programme and in the activities of the party which have been found to be contrary to Catholic doctrine and Catholic practice, and therefore irreconcilable with the Catholic name and profession. And in doing this We have fulfilled a precise duty of Our episcopal ministry towards Our dear sons who are members of the party, so that their conscience may be at peace.

63. We believe then that We have thus, at the same time, accomplished a good work for the party itself. What interest and success can the party gain, in a Catholic country like Italy, through retaining in its programme ideas, maxims, and practices which cannot be reconciled with a Catholic conscience? The consciences of peoples, as of individuals, come home again in the long run and seek the paths which, for a short time or a long, have been lost from sight or have been abandoned.

64. And lest it be alleged that "Italy is Catholic but anti-clerical," We will say something on this point. You, Venerable Brethren, who in the great and small Italian dioceses live in continuous contact with the good folk of all the country, you know and you see every day how (except when somebody deceives or misleads them) they are far removed from all anticlericalism.

65. It is known by all who are familiar with the history of the country that anti-clericalism has had in Italy the importance and the strength conferred upon it by Masonry and Liberalism when these were the powers ruling Italy. But in our own day, on the occasion of the Lateran Treaties, the unparalleled enthusiasm which united and overjoyed Italians would have left no room for anti-clericalism if it had not been evoked and encouraged on the very morrow of the Treaty. During the recent occurrences, orders from high personages have switched anticlericalism on or off, and this has been plain to all. There can be no doubt that a mere hundredth or even a thousandth part of the force used against Catholic Action will suffice to keep anticlericalism in its place.

66. But other and very serious fears for the future concern Us. At a meeting which was most official and most solemn, a meeting which was held immediately after these last acts, which were for Us and for the Catholics of all Italy and of all the world so sad and depressing, it was declared that "respect for the Catholic religion, and for its supreme Head, is unchanged." But the respect which is "unchanged" is that same respect which We have already experienced. It is the respect which has had its expression in vastly extended and hateful police-measures, prepared in the deep silence of a conspiracy, and executed with lightning-like suddenness, on the very vigil of Our birthday, which was the occasion of many acts of kindness and of courtesy towards Us on the part of the Catholic world, and of the non-Catholic world also. It is the respect which has expressed itself in violences and in irreverences permitted to be perpetrated without let or hindrance. For what, therefore, can We hope? What things must We not expect? Many are asking if this strange method of speaking and of writing in such circumstances and so soon after such occurrences is not to be explained as irony. For Our own part We wish to exclude that hypothesis.

67. In the same context and in immediate relation with the "unchanged respect," there is an allusion of "refuges and protections" given to the still remaining opponents of the [Fascist] party, and "the directors of the 9,000 groups of Fascists in Italy" are ordered to direct their attention to this situation. More than one of you, Venerable Brethren, has already had experience and has given Us sad information about the effect of these remarks, these insinuations and these orders, which have induced a new outbreak of hateful surveillance, of denunications, and of intimidations. How, therefore, can We prepare for the future? What can We and must We not expect? We do not fear; because the fear of God expels the fear of man. But what is to be done if, as We have reason to believe, it has been decided that Our Catholic young people must not meet, ever silently, save at the cost of bitter punishment for their leaders? What new thing, therefore, We ask Ourselves does the future prepare and threaten?

68. It is precisely in this extreme of doubt and of foreboding to which men have reduced Us that Our every care vanishes, and that Our spirit opens to the most confident and consoling hopes, because the future is in the hands of God. God is with us; and "if God be for us who is against us?"

69. A sign and a sensible proof of the divine aid and favour We already see and taste in your helpfulness and co-operation, Venerable Brethren. If We have been well informed, it has been said recently that Catholic Action is now in the hands of the Bishops, and that there is nothing more to fear. And up to this point the statement is good, very good, except for that phrase "nothing more," which seems to imply that hitherto then was indeed something to fear, and except also that word "now," as if before and from the beginning Catholic Action was not always essentially diocesan and dependent on the Bishops (as We have above pointed out); and also for this, principally for this, We have always nourished the most certain confidence that Our directions were observed. For this reason, next to the promised unfailing divine assistance, We remain, and We shall remain, in the most serene confidence, even if tribulation - let Us rather say the exact word - even if persecution shall continue and intensify. We know that you are and you know yourselves that you are, our Brethren in the episcopate and in the apostolate. We know, and you know, too, Venerable Brethren, that you are the successor of those Apostles whom St. Paul called with words of towering sublimity, the "Glory of Christ" (II *Corinthians* VIII, 23.) You know that no mortal man, such as the head of a State or of a Government, but the Holy Ghost Himself has set you in the places which Peter has assigned to you to rule in the Church of God. These and so many other holy and sublime things that concern you, Venerable Brethren, are evidently ignored or forgotten by him who thinks of you and calls you, Bishops of Italy, "the officials of the State," from which the very formula of the oath which it is necessary for you to make to the Sovereign clearly distinguishes and separates you, for the oath especially states: "as is proper for a Catholic Bishop."

70. Great, also, and truly a measureless reason for hoping for the best is the immense chorus of prayers that the Church of Jesus Christ has offered up from all parts of the world to the divine Founder of the Church and to His blessed Mother for the Church's visible Head, the successor of Peter, just in the same way as was done twenty centuries ago, when persecution assailed Peter himself - the prayers of pastors and of flocks, of clergy and of faithful, of members of religious orders, of adult and of youths, and of children, prayers in the most exquisite and efficacious forms; of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and eucharistic communions; of supplications and of acts of adoration and reparation; of spontaneous immolations and of sufferings endured in a Christian manner; prayers of which the echo reached Us during all those days immediately following the sad events, and which brought Us great consolation, never so strong and so consoling as on this sacred and solemn day dedicated to the memory of the Princes of the Apostles, and on which day divine providence has disposed that We have been able to finish this encyclical letter.

71. In answer to prayer everything is definitely promised; and if the answer will not be the re-establishment of serene and tranquil relations, it will have its answer at any rate in Christian patience, in holy courage, in the infallible joy of suffering something with Jesus and for Jesus, with the youth and for the youth so dear to Him, until the Hour hidden in the mystery of the Divine Heart, which will infallibly be the most opportune for the cause of truth and of good.

72. And since from so many prayers We must hope for everything, and since everything is possible to that God who has promised everything in answer to prayer, We have confident hope that He will illumine men's minds with truth and will turn their wills to good, so that the Church of God, which wishes to take nothing from the State of that which belongs to the competence of the State, will cease to be asked for that which is of the Church's competence - the education and the Christian formation of youth, as this is Hers, not through human favour, but by divine mandate. She must always claim it with an insistence and an intransigence which cannot cease or waver, because it does not come from human desire or design or from human ideas changeable in different times and places and circumstances, but from the divine and inviolable decree. And we are inspired also by faith and confidence to believe that good will undoubtedly come from the recognition of such a truth and of such a right.

73. Father of all the redeemed, and Vicar of that Redeemer who, after having taught and commanded all to love their enemies, died pardoning those who were crucifying Him, We are not and never will be the enemy of anyone; nor will Our true sons, those who wish to remain worthy of the name of Catholic. Yet Catholics will never be able to agree to adopt or to favour maxims or ways of thinking and of acting contrary to the right of the Church and to the welfare of souls, and therefore contrary to the rights of Almighty God. How preferable to this obstinate clash of minds and of wills would be a peaceful and tranquil union of thoughts and of sentiments! Such a union could not fail to translate itself into a fruitful co-operation of all for the true good and for the common good, and it would be rewarded by the sympathetic applause of the Catholics of all the world, instead of meeting, as at present, with universal blame and discontent.

74. We pray the God of all mercies, through the intercession of His Blessed Mother (who so recently smiled on Us from the splendours of her pluricentenary celebration), and of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, that He will make us all to see what we ought all to do, and that He will give us the strength to put it into effect. May Our apostolic benediction, the augury and pledge of divine blessings, descend upon you, Venerable Brethren, on your clergy and on your people, and remain with you for ever.

Rome, from the Vatican, on the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, June 29, 1931.

PIUS XI

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