

Pope Pius X on Social Reform

By Pope Pius X

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Introduction

So clear and forcible was the direction taken by Leo XIII in the methods of social regeneration. Gradually his weighty words had effect among Catholics.

A subject so fascinating, so full of bitter contrasts, and often so apparently hopeless, has aroused strenuous energy and devotedness especially among the young. A new generation, ardent and sanguine, has at times rushed onwards too eagerly. There has been a tendency, perhaps, to imagine that a re-setting of the social machine was the one means required to restore to equilibrium the disturbed forces of society. Here and there a too exclusive reliance has been placed on popular effort and influence.

For these reasons Pius X has, on one or two occasions, been called upon to check, not indeed the movement towards social reform, but the extravagances of imprudent reformers.

In his first Encyclical (October 4, 1903) (see the Actes de S.S. Pie X, 1, pp. 30-46), he had referred to the social work of clergy and laity, and laid special emphasis on the importance of living up to the principles of the Catholic Faith (p. 44). A few weeks later, in a letter to Count Giovanni Grosoli, President of the then forthcoming Congress at Bologna, he directed him "to take as his guide one whose intelligence was well known. In vain will you look for a new programme, for a programme has already been given you by Leo XIII. It is incumbent on you to adhere to the directions he has furnished, and on no account to depart from them" (ib. pp. 102-3).

Notwithstanding these wise words of counsel, differences of view occurred at the Congress, in consequence of which the Pope felt called upon to interfere for the future guidance of his flock in these difficult questions. Still, he deemed it unnecessary to offer new suggestions. He simply compiled from the classical utterances of Leo XIII and an Instruction of the Sacred Congregation a direct, continuous, and orderly statement of Catholic teaching. Such is in substance the *Motu proprio* on Christian Social Action, published with the full force of law on December 18, 1903 (ib. I, pp. 108-12), and here reprinted. (The Italian original may be consulted in the *Acta S. Sedis*, vol. xxxvi, pp. 339-45.)

As the reader will perceive, this *Motu proprio* presents an authoritative code of doctrine and action, which must be strictly observed by all Catholics in their campaign of social reform. It is, therefore, of no small importance that, if possible at the beginning of their studies, all interested in these questions should imbibe and assimilate the laws which successive Popes in these days of anxiety and conflict have formulated for their guidance.

Early in the following year the Pope, addressing a group of the employers of labour from the North of France, said: "We recognize in you devoted men whose twenty-five years of labour for the

spiritual and temporal necessities of your workpeople have bound you together in the closest union" (February 8, 1904; 1. p. 215). A few weeks later he gave his authorization to the programme of the work of the Catholic Congresses in Italy. The President, Count Medolago Albani, in his address to the Pontiff had observed: "Our object is to restore to labour ... that organization which was one of the greatest glories of the Middle Ages—to establish unions of employers, of the employed, and also of both employers and employed. With the help of God, and in conformity with the instructions of the Holy See, we trust to reach the lofty object at which we are aiming... namely, to regulate, with due regard for mutual rights and duties, the relations of class with class, according to the demands of justice enhanced and completed by charity. We shall then be able to bring the two factors of production, capital and labour (as harmonious associates for the common good, both material and moral), to the feet of your Holiness, Roman Pontiff the restorer in Christ of human labour and social peace" (March 16, 1904; I, p. 114).

The Pope, in his reply, warmly encouraged the congressists, entered into the details of their project, and added: "We will assist you always by Our authority and Our words" (ib.). Again and again, during the same year, the Holy Father spoke words of similar import to the industrial pilgrimages that visited the Vatican, as in the days of Leo XIII.

On September 25, 1904, in giving audience to the members of the pilgrimage of the Jeunesse Catholique, the Holy Father bade them, "after having given their brethren the spiritual bread of good example, to complete the precept of charity by offering all those who were in need their material bread by means of economic institutions and works of beneficence" (ib. p. 230).

During the course of the next few months difficulties arose in the methods of carrying out the social crusade in Italy. Without delay the Pontiff intervened to save the situation by words of encouragement and of definite though gentle warning. This Instruction on the manner of conducting the social campaign he addressed to the Bishops of Italy. It forms a significant and invaluable guide to all Catholic social workers. Certain portions, which have reference to the particular circumstances of time and place which had evoked the Letter, have here been omitted, and the rest of the Instruction is given in the form of extracts.

The original Italian may be consulted in the *Acta S. Sedis*, vol. xxxvii, pp. 741-67. A French translation is given in the *Actes de SS. Pie X*, vol. ii, pp. 90-104 (5 Rue Bayard, Paris).

Oscott College, May, 1910.

Henry Parkinson

Christian Social Action

From the time of Our first Encyclical to the Bishops of the whole world, in which We re-echoed all that Our glorious predecessors had said concerning the action of the Catholic laity, We have declared this undertaking to be most praiseworthy and even necessary in the present condition of the Church and of civil society. We could not do otherwise than commend highly the zeal of so many eminent persons who have for a long time devoted themselves to this noble task, and the ardour of so many of the flower of Our young people, who have, without delay, given it their support. The nineteenth Catholic Congress, lately held at Bologna (promoted and encouraged by Ourselves), has sufficiently proved to all how vigorous is the strength of Catholics, and how much

that is useful and beneficial may be obtained among a believing people where their action is rightly directed and disciplined, and where there reigns unity in thought, affection, and work in all who take part in the movement.

At the same time, We deeply regret that certain disagreements among them should have given rise to disputes somewhat too keen, which, if not at once repressed, may divide these forces and so diminish their efficiency. We cannot now keep silence on this point, having, before the Congress, so strongly insisted on union and harmony above everything, so that all might agree in arranging whatever has to do with the practical rules of Catholic action. And because differences of opinion in practical matters easily spread to the domain of theory, from which such differences necessarily derive support, it behoves Us to re-state the principles which ought to animate all Catholic action.

Our great Predecessor, Leo XIII, of holy memory, luminously traced the rules of Christian popular action in the famous Encyclicals, *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, of December 28, 1878; *Rerum Novarum*, of May 15, 1891; and *Graves de Communi*, of January 18, 1901; and again in a special Instruction issued by the Sacred Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, January 27, 1902.

And We, who, no less than our predecessor, recognize how necessary it is to guide Christian popular action aright, desire that those most prudent rules should be exactly and fully observed, and that no one should be so bold as to set them aside, how little soever. Therefore, in order to make them, as it were, more living and more ready to hand, We have decided to collect them in the following articles, abridged from the documents themselves, as the fundamental regulation of Christian popular action. They ought to be for all Catholics the constant rule of their conduct.

Fundamental Regulation of Christian Popular Action

I. Human society, as God has established it, is composed of unequal elements, just as the members of the human body are unequal; to make them all equal is impossible, and would be the destruction of society itself (*Enc. Quod Apostolici Muneris*).

II. The equality of the different members of society consists solely in this: that all men come from the hand of their Creator; that they have been redeemed by Jesus Christ; and that they will be judged, rewarded, or punished by God according to the exact measure of their merits and of their demerits (*Enc. Quod Apostolici Muneris*).

III. Consequently, it is conformable to the order established by God that in human society there should be princes and subjects, masters and men, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, nobles and plebeians, who, united by a bond of love, should help one another to attain their final end in Heaven, and their material and moral well-being on earth (*Enc. Quod Apostolici*).

IV. With regard to the goods of this earth, man has not only, like the animals, the use of them, but also the right of permanent ownership: and this, not only with reference to those goods which are consumed in being used, but also with reference to others (*Enc. Rerum Novarum*).

V. Private property is an indisputable natural right, whether it be the fruit of labour or industry, or the transfer or gift on the part of another, and each one may reasonably dispose of it at will (*Enc. Rerum Novarum*).

VI. To calm the strife between rich and poor, it is necessary to distinguish between justice and charity. Only when justice has been violated is there a right to make a claim (Enc. Rerum Novarum.)

VII. The obligations of the poor and of the workman are these: to perform wholly and faithfully the work which has been freely and equitably agreed upon; not to injure masters in their property or person; to abstain from acts of violence, even in the defence of their own rights, and never to turn their demands into disturbances (Enc. Rerum Novarum).

VIII. The obligations of justice for capitalists and masters are as follows: to pay a just wage to workmen; not to injure their lawful savings by violence, fraud, nor by open nor hidden usury; to allow them freely to fulfil their religious duties; not to expose them to corrupting allurements, nor to the danger of scandal; not to entice them from a love of their family, and from careful thrift; not to impose on them work unsuited to their strength, age, and sex (Enc. Rerum Novarum).

IX. It is an obligation of charity for the rich and for those who have means, to help the poor and needy, according to the precept of the Gospel. This precept is of such binding force that, at the day of judgement, as our Lord Himself tells us, a special account of its fulfilment will be required (Matt. xxv.) (Enc. Rerum Novarum).

X. The poor, on their part, ought not to blush for their poverty, nor disdain the charity of the rich, above all when they think of Jesus our Redeemer, Who, though He could have been born in wealth, made Himself poor to ennoble poverty and enrich it with incomparable merit for Heaven (Enc. Rerum Novarum).

XI. Capitalists and workmen may themselves largely help towards the solution of the labour question, by institutions formed to give timely aid to those who are in need, as also to draw together and unite the two classes. Such are societies of mutual help, numerous private insurance societies, what are called "patronages" for the young, and above all, working men's unions (Enc. Rerum Novarum).

XII. This solution is the special aim of the Christian Popular Action, or Christian Democracy, with its many and various undertakings. But this Christian Democracy ought to be understood in the sense already determined by authority, which is far removed from that of "Social Democracy," and is based on the principles of the Catholic faith and morality, especially on that of never attacking in any way the inviolable right of private property (Enc. Graves de Communi).

XIII. Moreover, Christian Democracy ought never to mix in politics, and ought never to be made use of for party purposes, or political objects; that is not its province; but it should be a beneficent activity in favour of the people, founded on the natural law, and the precepts of the Gospel (Enc. Graves de Communi). (Instr. of the S. Cong. of Extraord. Eccles. Affairs.)

Christian Democrats in Italy must abstain entirely from participating in any political action whatever; which, under existing circumstances, for reasons of the highest order, is forbidden to any Catholic (last quoted).

XIV. In carrying on its work, Christian Democracy is strictly bound to dependence on ecclesiastical authority by complete submission and obedience to the Bishops and their representatives. It is neither meritorious zeal nor true piety to undertake things fair and good in themselves if not approved by the lawful Pastor (Enc. Graves).

XV. In order that this Christian action may have unity of guidance, it will be directed, in Italy, by the Catholic Congresses and Committees, which, during so many years of praiseworthy labours, have deserved so well of the Church, and to whom Pius IX and Leo XIII, of holy memory, entrusted the charge of directing the general Catholic movement, always under the auspices and guidance of the Bishops (Enc. Graves de Communi).

XVI. In all that concerns religious interests and the action of the Church in society, Catholic writers ought to submit themselves wholly, in mind and heart, like all the rest of the faithful, to the Bishops and to the Roman Pontiff. They should especially beware of anticipating, in any grave matter, the decisions of the Holy See (Instr. of the S. Cong. of Extra. Eccles. Affairs).

XVII. Christian Democratic writers, like all Catholic writers, ought to submit to the preliminary censorship of the Ordinary, all writings relating to religion, to Christian morality, and to natural ethics, conformably to the Constitution *Officiorum et Munerum* (art. 41). Clerics ought also, in virtue of the same Constitution (art. 42) to obtain the permission of the Ordinary previous to the publication of writings even of a purely technical character (Instr. of S. Cong. of Extra: Eccles. Affairs).

XVIII. They should also make every effort and sacrifice to preserve charity and harmony among themselves, avoiding all abusive language and reproaches. When causes of disagreement arise, they should, before publishing anything in the newspapers, refer to ecclesiastical authority, which will arrange the matter justly. Should they be reprovved by authority let them obey promptly, without evasion and without making public complaint, exception being made for appeal to a higher Authority, in the right manner, and when the case seems to require it (Instr. of S. Cong. of Extra. Eccles. Affairs).

XIX. Finally, let Catholic writers, while upholding the cause of the people and of the poor, beware of using language which may inspire the masses with hatred of the upper classes of society. Let them not talk of claims and of justice, when it is a question of pure charity, as has already been explained. Let them bear in mind that Christ wishes to unite all men by the mutual bond of love which is the perfection of justice, and implies the duty of working for each other's good (Instr. of S. Cong. of Extra. Eccles. Affairs).

The foregoing fundamental rules, We, of Our own movement and with sure knowledge, by Our apostolic authority, renew in each of their parts, and We order that they shall be sent to all Catholic Committees, Circles, and Unions, of whatever form and kind they may be. These Societies ought to keep them posted up in the place where they assemble, and often read them at their meetings. We also order Catholic newspapers to publish them in their entirety, to promise to observe them, and religiously to observe them in fact; if not, they must be gravely admonished, and if after such admonition they do not amend, they must be interdicted by ecclesiastical authority.

But as speech and vigorous action are of no use unless constantly preceded, accompanied, and followed by example, the necessary characteristic of all the members of every Catholic activity should be the public manifestation of their faith by holiness of life, uprightness of conduct, and a scrupulous observance of the laws of God and of the Church: and this because it is the duty of every Christian, and also in order that he, who is on the contrary part may be afraid, having no evil to say of us (Tit. ii. 8).

From these Our anxious cares for the welfare of Catholic action, especially in Italy, we hope, by the divine blessing, to obtain an abundance of precious fruit.

Given in Rome, at S. Peter's, the 18th day of December, 1903, in the first year of Our Pontificate.

Pius X, Pope.

Extracts from the Encyclical on Catholic Social Action

Encouragement of Social Work

Addressed to the Bishops of Italy, June 11, 1905

Here We will only call to mind the many good works undertaken for the welfare of the Church, of society, and of individuals under the general name of Catholic Action, which by the grace of God flourish throughout the world.

You well know how dear they are to Us and how ardently We desire to see them strengthened and encouraged... We have also, on this question, published, or caused to be authoritatively published, certain documents which you all know. It is true that some of these documents, by force of circumstances bringing sorrow to Us, were meant rather to remove obstacles which hindered the progress of Catholic action, and to condemn certain ill-regulated tendencies which were creeping in, to the grave injury of the common cause.

Our heart longed to send to all a word of comfort and fatherly encouragement, so that, on the ground cleared, as far as lay in Us, from every obstacle, good might continue to be built up and largely increased. We are therefore very happy to do so now by this letter, for the consolation of every one, feeling sure that Our words will be heard and obeyed with docility by all.

An Immense Field of Action

Immense is the field of Catholic action; it excludes absolutely nothing which in any way, directly or indirectly, belongs to the divine mission of the Church.

It is plainly necessary to take part individually in a work so important, not only for the sanctification of our own souls, but also in order to spread and more fully open out the Kingdom of God in individuals, families, and society, each one working according to his strength for his neighbour's good, by the diffusion of revealed truth, the exercise of Christian virtue, and the spiritual and corporal works of charity and mercy. Such is the conduct worthy of God to which St. Paul exhorts us, so as to please Him in all things, bringing forth fruits of all good works, and increasing in the knowledge of God: *"That you may walk worthy of God in all things pleasing; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Coloss. i. 10).

Besides these benefits, there are many in the natural order, which, without being directly the object of the Church's mission, nevertheless flow from it as one of its natural consequences. Such is the light of Catholic revelation that it vividly illuminates all knowledge; so great is the strength of the Gospel maxims that the precepts of the natural law find in them a surer basis and a more energetic vigour; such, in fine, is the power of the truth and morality taught by Jesus Christ that even the material well-being of individuals, of the family, and of human society, receive from them support and protection.

The Church and Civilization

The Church, while preaching Jesus crucified, who was a stumbling-block and folly to the world, has been the first inspirer and promoter of civilization. She has spread it wherever her apostles have preached, preserving and perfecting what was good in ancient pagan civilization, rescuing from barbarism and raising to a form of civilized society the new peoples who took refuge in her maternal bosom, and giving to the whole of human society, little by little, no doubt, but with a sure and ever onward march, that characteristic stamp which it still everywhere preserves. The civilization of the world is Christian civilization; the more frankly Christian it is, so much is it more true, more lasting, and more productive of precious fruit; the more it withdraws from the Christian ideal, so much the feebler is it, to the great detriment of society.

Thus, by the intrinsic force of things, the Church becomes again in fact the guardian and protector of Christian civilization. This truth was recognized and admitted in former times; it even formed the immovable foundation of civil legislation. On it rested the relations of Church and States, the public recognition of the authority of the Church in all matters relating in any way to conscience, the subordination of all State laws to the divine laws of the Gospel, the harmony of the two powers, civil and ecclesiastical, for procuring the temporal well-being of the nations without injury to their eternal welfare.

Obstacles from Without

It is unnecessary to tell you what prosperity and happiness, what peace and concord, what respectful submission to authority, and what excellent government would be established and maintained in the world if the perfect ideal of Christian civilization could be everywhere realized. But, given the continual warfare of the flesh with the spirit, of darkness with light, of Satan with God, we cannot hope for so great a good, at least in its full measure. Hence, against the peaceful conquests of the Church arose unceasing attacks, the more deplorable and fatal as human society tends more to govern itself by principles opposed to the Christian ideal, and to separate itself wholly from God.

This is not a reason for losing courage. The Church knows that the gates of hell will never prevail against her; but she knows also that she will be oppressed in this world, that her apostles are sent like lambs among wolves, that her faithful children will ever be hated and despised, as her Divine Founder was covered with hatred and contempt. Nevertheless the Church goes fearlessly on, and while extending the Kingdom of God in places where it has not yet been preached, she strives by every means to repair the losses inflicted on the Kingdom already acquired.

The Work of Restoration

To restore all things in Christ has ever been the Church's motto, and it is specially Ours, in the perilous times in which we live. To restore all things, not in any fashion, but in Christ; "that are in heaven, and on earth, in Him," adds the Apostle; to restore in Christ not only what directly depends on the divine mission of the Church to conduct souls to God, but also, as We have explained, that which flows spontaneously from this divine mission, viz., Christian civilization in each and every one of the elements which compose it.

To dwell only on this last part of the desired restoration, you see well what support is given to the Church by those chosen bands of Catholics whose aim is to unite all their forces in order to combat anti-Christian civilization by every just and lawful means, and to repair in every way the grievous

disorders which flow from it; to reinstate Jesus Christ in the family, the school, and society; to re-establish the principle that human authority represents that of God; to take intimately to heart the interests of the people especially those of the working and agricultural classes, not only by the inculcation of religion, the only true source of comfort in the sorrows of life, but also by striving to dry their tears, to soothe their sufferings, and by wise measures to improve their economic condition; to endeavour, consequently, to make public laws conformable to justice, to amend or suppress those which are not so; finally, with a true Catholic spirit, to defend and support the rights of God in everything, and the no less sacred rights of the Church.

All these works, of which Catholic laymen are the principal supporters and promoters, and whose form varies according to the special needs of each nation, and the particular circumstances of each country, constitute what is generally known by a distinctive, and surely a very noble name: Catholic Action or Action of Catholics. This has always come to the aid of the Church, and the Church has always welcomed and blessed it, although it has acted in various ways in accordance with the age.

New Adaptations

And here it must at once be observed that it is impossible at the present day to re-establish in the same form all the institutions which may have been useful, and were even the only efficient ones in past centuries, so numerous are the radical modifications which time has brought to society and public life, and so many are the fresh needs which changing circumstances cease not to call forth. But the Church, throughout her long history, has always and on every occasion luminously shown that she possesses a wonderful power of adaptation to the varying conditions of civil society; without injury to the integrity or immutability of faith or morals, and always safeguarding her sacred rights, she easily bends and adapts herself in all that is contingent and accidental, to the vicissitudes of time, and the new needs of society.

Godliness, says St. Paul, lends itself to everything, and possessing divine promises as to the goods of this life as well as to those of the future: "*Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*" (1 Tim. iv. 8.) And Catholic action also, while suitably varying its outward forms and methods, remains ever the same in the principles which guide it, and in the very noble end at which it aims. And in order that it may at the same time be really efficient, it will be well to point out carefully the conditions it requires, if its nature and action are well considered.

A New Apostolate

Before everything, people must be thoroughly convinced that an instrument is useless if it is not suited to the work it has to do. Catholic action (as is proved to demonstration from what has already been said), by proposing to restore all things in Christ, becomes a real apostolate for the honour and glory of Christ Himself. To carry it out rightly, we must have divine grace, and the apostle receives none if he is not united to Christ. Only when we have formed Jesus Christ within us shall we more easily be able to give Him back to the family and to society. All, therefore, who are called upon to direct, or who devote themselves to the promotion of the Catholic movement, ought to be Catholics who are proof against everything, firm in faith, solidly instructed in religious matters, truly submissive to the Church and especially to this supreme Apostolic Chair and to the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth; they ought to be men of real piety, of manly virtue, and of a life so chaste and stainless that they are an efficacious example to all.

If the soul is not thus regulated, not only will it be difficult to stir others to good, but almost impossible to act with a right intention, and strength will fail for bearing perseveringly the weariness which every apostolate brings with it, the calumnies of enemies, the coldness and want of help from men good in themselves, sometimes the jealousy of friends and fellow-workers, excusable, doubtless, on account of the weakness of human nature, but very harmful, and a cause of discord, offence, and quarrels. Virtue, patient and strong, and at the same time sweet and tender, is alone able to remove or lessen these difficulties in such a way that the work to which Catholic energies are devoted, may not be compromised. *"For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."* It is also necessary to define clearly what are the works on which Catholic strength should be energetically and perseveringly employed. These works must be of such evident importance, must bear such relation to the needs of modern society, must be so well adapted to moral and material interests, especially those of the people and the poorer classes, that while arousing in promoters of Catholic action the greatest activity for obtaining the important and certain results which are to be looked for, they may also be readily understood and gladly welcomed by all.

Just because the grave problems of the social life of the present day demand a prompt and safe solution, every one is keenly desirous to know and understand the various ways in which these solutions are practical. Discussions of one kind or another are becoming more and more numerous, and are readily spread abroad by the press. It is therefore supremely necessary that Catholic activity should seize the opportune moment, should advance courageously, should bring forward its own solution and urge the recognition of it by means of a strong, active, intelligent and well organized propaganda, so as to be able to confront directly the propaganda of the enemy.

Christian Principles

The goodness and justice of Christian principles, the strict morality which Catholics profess, their entire disinterestedness in personal matters, the frankness and sincerity with which they seek only the true, solid, and highest good of their neighbour; finally, their evident aptitude for promoting, even better than others, the real economic interests of the people—all this cannot fail to make an impression on the mind and heart of all who listen to them, and to swell their ranks in such a way as to form a solid and compact body, capable of vigorously resisting the contrary current, and of commanding the respect of hostile parties.

Our predecessor Leo XIII, of holy memory, fully perceived this, and pointed out, notably in the famous Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and in later documents, the object to which Catholic action should be specially devoted, namely, the practical solution of the social question according to Christian principles. And We Ourselves, following these wise rules, have, in our *Motu proprio* of December 18, 1903, given to Christian popular action, which comprises the whole Catholic social movement, a fundamental constitution to be the practical rule of the common work, and the bond of union and charity. On this basis, therefore, and with this very holy and very necessary aim, Catholic works ought before everything to group and strengthen themselves, various and multiform as they are, but all equally designed to promote efficaciously the same social good.

Unity

But in order that this social action may continue and prosper with the necessary cohesion of the different works which compose it, it is above all essential that all Catholics should preserve an

exemplary harmony among themselves, and this will never be acquired if there is not in all a unity of design. As to the necessity of this there can be no manner of doubt, so clear and evident are the teachings of this Apostolic Chair; so bright is the light which the most eminent Catholics of all countries have, by their writings, shed on this subject; so praiseworthy is the example, as we have often observed, of the Catholics of other countries, who, precisely by this harmony and unity of plan, have, in a short time, obtained abundant and very encouraging results!

To secure this end, it has been stated elsewhere, how remarkably efficient, among various undertakings equally worthy of praise, is an institution of a general character, which under the name of Popular Union, is intended to unite Catholics of all social classes, but especially the great masses of the people, around a single and common centre of propaganda, and social organization. It meets, in fact, a want felt alike in almost every country; the simplicity of its constitution arises from the very nature of things which are everywhere equally to be found; it cannot be said to suit one nation rather than another, but it is suitable to all which have the same needs and dangers. Its eminently popular character causes it to be readily appreciated and accepted; it does not interfere with, or obstruct any other institution, but rather gives them strength and cohesion, because its strictly personal organization urges individuals to join special institutions, trains them to practical and really useful work, and unites all minds in a common aim and sentiment.

When once this social centre is established, all other institutions of an economic character, designed to solve the social problem practically in its various forms, find themselves, as it were, spontaneously grouped together for the common end which unites them; and this does not prevent them from taking various forms, and different methods of action, according to divers needs, and each one's special object...

This line of conduct won the highest praise for the Work of Catholic Congresses and Committees, thanks to the intelligent activity of the excellent men who directed it, and who have been put at the head of its various branches, or still direct them. This is why, in virtue of Our own wish, a like centre or union of works of an economic character has been purposely maintained since the dissolution of the above-mentioned Work of Congresses, it must act in the future under the wise direction of those in charge of it.

Suitable Methods

Further, in order that Catholic action may be effectual on all points, it is not enough that it be adapted to actual social needs only; it ought also to be invigorated by all the practical methods furnished at the present day by progress in social and economic studies, by experience already gained elsewhere, by the condition of civil society, and even by the public life of States. Otherwise there will be a risk of groping for a long time for new and hazardous things, while good and safe ones are ready to hand, and have been already well tried; or again, there will be the danger of proposing institutions and methods suitable, perhaps, in former times, but not understood by people of the present day; or finally, there will be the danger of stopping half-way by not using, in the measure in which they are granted, those rights of citizenship which modern constitutions offer to all, and therefore also to Catholics.

We dwell on this last point, for it is certain that the present constitution of States offers to all without distinction the power of influencing public opinion, and Catholics, while recognizing the obligations imposed by the law of God and the precepts of the Church, may with safe conscience enjoy this liberty, and prove themselves capable, as much as, and even more than others, of co-

operating in the material and civil well-being of the people, thus acquiring that authority and respect which may make it even possible for them to defend and promote a higher good, namely, that of the soul. These civil rights are many and various, going as far as a direct share in the political life of the country by representing the people in the legislature...

Civic Co-operation

This makes it incumbent on all Catholics to prepare themselves prudently and seriously for political life in case they should be called to it. Hence it becomes necessary that this same activity, already so laudably displayed by Catholics in preparing themselves by good electoral organization, for administrative life in parish and county councils, should be extended to a suitable preparation and organization for political life; this was opportunely recommended in the Circular issued on December 3, 1904, by the general Presidency of Economic Works in Italy.

At the same time the other principles which rule the conscience of every true Catholic must be inculcated and put in practice. He should remember above all things to be and to show himself, in all circumstances, a true Catholic, undertaking and fulfilling public duties with the firm and constant intention of promoting as much as he can the social and economic welfare of his country, especially of the people, according to the maxims of a distinctly Christian civilization, at the same time defending the supreme interests of the Church, which are those of religion and justice.

Such are the characteristics, aims, and conditions of Catholic action considered in its more important part, namely, the solution of the social question—a question worthy of the best energy and perseverance of all the Catholic forces.

This does not exclude the favouring and promotion of other works of divers kinds and varied organizations, all equally aiming at this or that particular good of society and of the people, and at the revival of Christian civilization under various special aspects.

Local Needs

These works arise, for the most part, from the zeal of individuals; they are spread throughout separate dioceses and are sometimes united in more extended federations. So long as their object is praiseworthy, their Christian principles firm, and the means they use are just, so much are they to be praised and encouraged in every way. A certain freedom of organization should be allowed them, for it is not possible, when many persons meet together, that all should be modelled on the same pattern or follow one single direction. Their organization should spring spontaneously from the works themselves; otherwise they will be like buildings of fine architecture, but without solid foundations, and therefore quite unstable.

It is also necessary to take into account the natural disposition of separate populations. Different usages and tendencies are found in different places. The important thing is to have a good foundation of solid principles, maintained with earnestness and constancy, and if this be the case, the method and form of the various works will be only accidental.

Congresses

Lastly, in order to renew and increase in all Catholic undertakings the necessary enthusiasm, to give to their promoters and members an opportunity of seeing and becoming acquainted with each other, to draw ever more closely the bonds of brotherly love, to enkindle in one another a more burning

zeal for efficient action, and to provide for the better establishment and spread of the same works, a wonderful help will be found in the meeting from time to time, according to the rules already given by the Holy See, of general or local Congresses of Italian Catholics; and they ought to be a solemn manifestation of Catholic faith, and a common festival of harmony and peace.

Submission to Ecclesiastical Authority

It remains for Us to treat of another point of the highest importance, namely, the relation which all the works of Catholic action should bear to ecclesiastical authority. If the teaching unfolded in the first part of this letter be well considered, it will easily be seen that all those works which are immediately in conjunction with the spiritual and pastoral ministry of the Church, and which have a religious aim intended directly for the good of souls, should submit in every smallest particular to the authority of the Church and to that of the Bishops, who are appointed by the Holy Spirit to rule the Church of God in the dioceses assigned to them.

But those other works also, which, as we have said, are designed chiefly to restore and promote in Christ true Christian civilization, and which constitute Catholic action in the sense explained, must by no means be considered independent of the advice and direction of ecclesiastical authority, inasmuch, especially, as they must all be conformed to the principles of Christian faith and morality; still less is it possible to imagine them in more or less open opposition to the same power.

It is certain that such works, from their very nature, ought to move with a befitting and reasonable freedom, since they are held responsible for their acts, particularly in temporal and economic matters, and in those of public, administrative, or political life, all which are foreign to a purely spiritual ministry. But as Catholics ever bear aloft the standard of Christ, for that very reason they bear aloft the standard of the Church; and so it is proper that they should receive it from the hands of the Church; that the Church should see that its honour is unstained; and that Catholics should submit, like docile, loving children, to this maternal vigilance...

The Work of the Clergy

While, however, we point out to all the right rule of Catholic action, we cannot disguise the no small danger to which the clergy of the present day are exposed; it is that of attaching an excessive importance to the material interests of the people, forgetting the much more serious ones of their sacred ministry.

The priest, raised higher than other men to fulfil the mission he has received from God, ought to keep himself equally above all human interests, all disputes, all classes of society. His proper field of action is the Church, where, as ambassador of God, he preaches the truth, and inculcates along with respect for the rights of God, respect also for the rights of every creature. Acting thus, he does not expose himself to opposition; he does not appear as a party man, supporting one side and going against another; nor for the sake of avoiding collision with certain tendencies, and of not irritating by argument minds already embittered, does he put himself in danger of disguising the truth, or of suppressing it, which in both cases would be to fail in his duty; nor is it necessary to remark that having very often to treat of material things, he might find himself involved in responsible liabilities, hurtful alike to his person and to the dignity of his ministry. He ought not, therefore, to join an association of this kind except after mature consideration, with the approval of his Bishop, and in those cases only where his assistance is safe from all danger and is evidently useful.

Nor does this in any way diminish his zeal. The true apostle ought to become all things to all men, to save all: like our Divine Redeemer, he ought to be moved with compassion, "seeing the multitudes distressed, lying like sheep that have no shepherd" (Matt. ix. 36). Let then each one strive by the efficacious propaganda of the press, by the living exhortation of speech, by direct help in the above-mentioned cases, to ameliorate, within the limits of justice and charity, the economic condition of the people, supporting and promoting those institutions which conduce to this end, and those especially which aim at fortifying the multitude against the invasion of Socialism; thus to save them at once from economic ruin and from moral and religious destruction. In this way the co-operation of the clergy in the works of Catholic action has a deeply religious end; it will never become a hindrance, but will be a help to their spiritual ministry by enlarging its sphere and multiplying its fruits.

The Need of Action

You see how anxious We have been to explain and inculcate the manner in which Catholic action is to be supported and promoted. It is not sufficient to point out what is good; it must be put into practice. This will be very much helped by your exhortations, and by your paternal and immediate encouragement to well-doing. Beginnings may be very small, but provided we really do begin, Divine Grace will soon cause them to grow and prosper. And let all Our beloved sons, who are devoting themselves to Catholic action, listen again to the words which spring so spontaneously from Our heart. Amid the bitter sorrows which daily surround Us, We will say, with the Apostle S. Paul (Phil. ii. 1-5), if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort comes to us from your charity, if any society of spirit, if any bowels of commiseration; fulfil ye Our joy, that you be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment, with humility and due submission, not seeking one's own convenience, but the common good, and imprinting on your hearts the mind which was in Christ Jesus, our Saviour. Let Him be the beginning of all your undertakings; *"All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Coloss. ii. 17); let Him be the end of your every work; *"For of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen"* (Rom. xi. 36)
