

LEO XIII. ON ECCLESIASTICAL STUDIES.

To Our Venerable Brothers the Archbishops, Bishops and Clergy of France.

VENERABLE BROTHERS, DEARLY BELOVED SONS: Since the day we were raised to the Pontifical Chair France has been ever the object to us of a special solicitude and affection. For from her God, in the unfathomable designs of His mercy over the world, has in the course of ages by preference chosen Apostolic men destined to preach the true faith to the limits of the globe, and to carry the light of the Gospel to the nations yet plunged in the darkness of paganism. He predestined her to be the defender of His Church and the instrument of His great works: *Gesta Dei per Francos*.

Obviously this high mission entails duties many and grave. Wishing, like our predecessors, to see France faithfully fulfil the glorious mandate wherewith she has been entrusted, we have on several occasions during our long pontificate addressed to her our advice, our encouragement, our exhortations. This we did in a special way in our Encyclical Letter of February 8, 1884, *Nobilissima Gallorum Gens*, and in our letter of February 16, 1892, published in French and beginning with the words: "*Au milieu des sollicitudes*." Our words were not without fruit, and we know from you, Venerable Brothers, that a large portion of the French people ever holds in honor the faith of their ancestors and faithfully observes the obligations it imposes. On the other hand, it could not escape us that the enemies of this holy faith have not been idle and have succeeded in banishing every religious principle from a large number of families, which, in consequence, live in lamentable ignorance of revealed truth, and in complete indifference to all that concerns their spiritual interests and the salvation of their souls.

While therefore with good reason we congratulate France on being a focus of apostolic work among nations destitute of the faith, we are also bound to encourage the efforts of those of her sons who, enrolled in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, are laboring to evangelize their own people, to preserve them from the invasion of naturalism and incredulity, with their fatal and inevitable consequences. Called by the will of God to be the saviour of the world, priests must always, and above all things, remember that they are by the very institution of Jesus Christ, "the salt of the earth,"¹ and hence St. Paul, writing to Timothy, justly concluded that "by their charity,

¹ Matt. v., 13.

their faith and their purity, they must be an example to the faithful in their words and in their relations with their neighbors."¹

That such is true of the French clergy, taken as a whole, has always been a great consolation to us to learn, Venerable Brothers, from the quadrennial reports you send us concerning the state of your dioceses, conformably to the Constitution of Sixtus V., and from the oral communications we receive from you whenever we have the happiness of conversing with you and receiving your confidences. Yes, dignity of life, ardor of faith, a spirit of devotedness and sacrifice, a zeal characterized by enthusiasm and generosity, an inexhaustible charity toward their neighbor, energy in all noble and fruitful enterprises making for the glory of God, the salvation of souls and the welfare of their country—these are the precious qualities traditional among the French clergy, and we are happy to be able here to render to them a public and fatherly testimony.

Still, precisely on account of the deep and tender affection we have for them, and at the same time to perform a duty of our Apostolic ministry and respond to the keen desire we feel to see them ever acting up to their great mission, we have resolved, Venerable Brothers, to treat in this letter of certain points to which present circumstances peremptorily call the conscientious attention of the chief pastors of the French Church and of the priests who work under their jurisdiction.

And in the first place it is clear that the more important, complex and difficult an office is the longer and more careful should be the preparation undergone by those who are called to fill it. But is there on earth a dignity higher than that of the priesthood or a ministry imposing a heavier responsibility than that whose object is the sanctification of all the free acts of man? Is it not of the government of souls that the Fathers have rightly said that it is "the art of arts;" that is, the most important and most delicate of all tasks to which a man may be applied for the benefit of his kind?—"Ars artium regimen animarum?"² Nothing must then be neglected to prepare those whom a divine vocation calls to this mission in order that they may fulfill it worthily and fruitfully.

To begin with, from among the young those are to be selected in whom the Most High has sown the seeds of a vocation. We are aware that, thanks to your wise recommendations, in many dioceses of France the priests of the different parishes, especially in country districts, apply themselves with a zeal and self-sacrifice which we cannot sufficiently praise in guiding themselves the studies of children in whom they have observed a marked tendency to piety and

¹ I. Tim. iv., 12.

² St. Greg. the Gr. Lib. Regulæ Past., P. I., c. 1.

an aptitude for intellectual work. The presbyteral schools are thus the first step, as it were, of the stairs which from the junior to the senior seminaries carry up to the priesthood those young men to whom the Saviour repeats the appeal He addressed to Peter and Andrew, to John and James, "Leave your nets; follow Me, I will make you fishers of men."¹

With regard to the junior seminary, this very valuable institution has been frequently and justly compared to the beds in which are set apart such plants as call for the most particular and assiduous care as the only way to make them bear fruit and produce a recompense for the labors of their cultivation. On this subject, we renew the recommendation addressed by our predecessor, Pius IX., to the Bishops in his Encyclical of December 8, 1849. This is itself based on one of the most important decisions of the Fathers of the Council of Trent. To France belongs the glory of having held it in most account during the present century, for of the ninety-four dioceses in the country there is not one which is not endowed with one or more junior seminaries.

We know, Venerable Brothers, the solicitude which you bestow on these institutions so justly dear to your pastoral zeal, and we congratulate you on it. The priests who labor, under your superintendence, for the formation of the youth called to enroll itself later on in the ranks of the sacerdotal army, cannot too often meditate before God on the exceptional importance of the mission with which you entrust them. They have not simply to instruct their children in the elements of letters and human science, like the general run of masters—that is the least part of their task. Their attention, zeal and devotion must be ever on the watch and active, in order, on the one hand, to study continually, under the eye and in the light of God, the souls of the children and the indications of their vocation to the service of the altar, and, on the other, to help the inexperience and feebleness of their young disciples in order to protect the precious grace of the Divine call against all deadly influences, both from without and from within. They have therefore to exercise a ministry that is humble, laborious and delicate, and requires constant abnegation. To sustain their courage in the fulfillment of their duties, they will take care to temper it in the purest sources of the spirit of faith. They must never lose sight of the fact that the children whose intelligence, heart and character they are engaged in forming are not being prepared for earthly functions, however legitimate or honorable. The Church confides those children to them in order that they may one day be fit to become priests; that

¹ Matt. iv., 19.

is to say, missionaries of the Gospel, continuers of the work of Jesus Christ, distributors of His Grace and His Sacraments. Let this purely supernatural consideration incessantly imbue their double function as professors and educators, and be the leaven, so to say, which is to be mixed with the best flour, according to the Gospel parable, so as to transform it into sweet and substantial bread.¹

And as an abiding thoughtfulness for the first and indispensable formation of the spirit and virtues of the priesthood should inspire the masters of your junior seminaries in their relations with their pupils, so, too, the system of study and the whole economy of discipline must be allied to this same primary and directing idea. We are not unaware, Venerable Brothers, that you are to a certain extent obliged to reckon with the State programme and with the conditions imposed by it for obtaining university degrees, owing to the fact that in certain cases such degrees are required of priests engaged in the management of free colleges under the patronage of the Bishops and religious congregations, or in the higher teaching of the Catholic faculties which you have so laudably established. It is, moreover, of sovereign importance for the maintenance of the influence of the clergy on society that they count among their ranks a sufficient number of priests yielding nothing in science, of which degrees are the official evidence, to the masters whom the State trains for its lyceums and universities.

Nevertheless, after making all the allowances imposed by circumstances for this exigency of the State programme, the studies of aspirants to the priesthood must remain faithful to the traditional methods of past ages. It is these which have produced the eminent men of whom France is so justly proud—the Petaus, Thomassins, Mabillons and many others, to say nothing of your Bossuet, called the Eagle of Meaux, because in loftiness of thought and nobility of expression his genius soars in the highest regions of Christian science and eloquence. The study of belles lettres rendered mighty aid in making these men valiant and useful workers in the service of the Church and capable of writing works which were truly worthy to pass down to posterity, and which contribute even to-day to the defense and propagation of revealed truth. For the belles lettres have the property, when taught by skilful Christian masters, of rapidly developing in the souls of young men all the germs of intellectual and moral life, whilst at the same time contributing accuracy and broadness to the judgment and elegance and distinction to expression.

This consideration assumes special importance when applied to

¹ Matt. x. i., 33.

Greek and Latin literature, the depositaries of those masterpieces of sacred science which the Church with good reason counts among her most precious treasures. Half a century ago, at that period (all too brief!) of true liberty, during which the bishops of France were free to meet and concert such measures as they deemed best calculated to further the progress of religion, and, at the same time, most profitable to the public peace, several of your Provincial Councils, Venerable Brothers, recommended in the most express terms the culture of the Latin tongue and literature. Even then your colleges deplored the fact that the knowledge of Latin in your country tended to diminish.¹

But if the methods of pedagogy in vogue in the State establishments have been for several years past progressively reducing the study of Latin and suppressing the exercises in prose and poetry which our fathers justly considered should hold a large place in college classes, the junior seminaries must put themselves on their guard against these innovations, inspired by utilitarian motives and working to the detriment of the solid formation of the mind. To the ancient methods so often justified by their results we would freely apply the words of St. Paul to his disciple Timothy, and with the apostle we would say to you, Venerable Brothers, "Guard the deposit"² with jealous care. If it should be destined—which God forbid!—one day to disappear from the other public schools, let your junior seminaries and free colleges keep it with an intelligent and patriotic solicitude. Doing so, you will be imitating the priests of Jerusalem, who, saving the sacred fire of the temple from the barbarian invader, so hid it as to be able to find it again and restore it to its splendor when the evil day should have passed.³

Once in possession of the Latin tongue—the key, so to say, of sacred science—and their mental faculties sufficiently developed by the study of the belles lettres, young men destined for the priesthood pass from the junior to the senior seminary. There they will prepare themselves by piety and the exercise of the priestly virtues for the reception of Holy Orders, while devoting themselves to the study of philosophy and theology.

In our Encyclical "*Æterni Patris*," which we once again recommend to the attentive perusal of your seminarists and their masters, we declared, with St. Paul as our authority, that it is by the empty subtleties of false philosophy "*per philosophiam et inanem fallaciam*"⁴ that the minds of the faithful are most frequently led astray and the purity of the faith corrupted among men, we added, and the events of the last twenty years have furnished bitter confirmation of the

¹ Litt. Synod. Patrum Conc. Paris ad clericos et fideles an., 1849, in *Collectione Lacensis* Tom. 17., col. 36. ² I. Tim. vi., 20. ³ II. Mach. i., 19-22. ⁴ Encyclical *Æterni Patris*.

reflections and apprehensions we expressed at the time. If one notes the critical condition of the times in which we live and ponders on the state of affairs in public and private life he will have no difficulty in seeing that the cause of the evils which oppress us, as well as those which menace, lies in the fact that erroneous opinions on all subjects, human and divine, have gradually percolated from philosophical schools through all ranks of society, and have come to be accepted by a large number of minds.¹

We renew our condemnation of those teachings of philosophy which have merely the name, and which by striking at the very foundation of human knowledge lead logically to universal skepticism and to irreligion. We are profoundly grieved to learn that for some years past some Catholics have felt at liberty to follow in the wake of a philosophy which under the specious pretext of freeing human reason from all preconceived ideas and from all illusions, denies it the right of affirming anything beyond its own operations, thus sacrificing to a radical subjectivism all the certainties which traditional metaphysics, consecrated by the authority of the strongest thinkers, laid down as the necessary and unshakable foundations for the demonstration of the existence of God, the spirituality and immortality of the soul, and the objective reality of the exterior world. It is to be deeply regretted that this doctrinal skepticism, of foreign importation and Protestant origin, should have been received with so much favor in a country so justly celebrated for its love of clearness of thought and expression. We know, Venerable Brothers, how far you share our well-grounded anxiety on this subject, and we reckon on you to redouble your solicitude and vigilance in shutting out this fallacious and dangerous philosophy from the teaching in your seminaries, and to honor more than ever the methods we recommended in the above-quoted Encyclical of August 4, 1879.

In our times the students in your junior and senior seminaries can less than ever afford to be strangers to the study of physical and natural science. To it, therefore, they must apply themselves—but in due measure and in wise proportions. It is by no means necessary that in the scientific course annexed to the study of philosophy the professors should feel themselves obliged to expound in detail the almost innumerable applications of physical and natural sciences in the different branches of human industry. It is enough that their pupils have an accurate knowledge of the main principles and summary conclusions, so as to be able to solve the objections which infidels draw from these sciences against the teachings of Revelation.

¹ *De Studiis Monasticis*, Part II., c. 9.

It is of capital importance that the students of your senior seminaries should study, for at least two years, with great care, "rational" philosophy, which, as the learned Benedictine Mabillon, the glory of his order and of France, used to say, will be of the greatest assistance to them, not only in teaching them how to reason well and arrive at right conclusions, but in putting them in a position to defend the orthodox faith against the captious and often sophistical arguments of adversaries.¹

Next come the sacred sciences, properly so called—Dogmatic and Moral Theology, Sacred Scripture, Church History and Canon Law. These are the sciences proper to the priest—in them he receives a first initiation during his sojourn in the senior seminary, but he must pursue his studies in them throughout the remainder of his life.

Theology is the science of the things of faith. It is nourished, Pope Sixtus V. tells us, at those ever-willing springs—the Holy Scriptures, the decisions of the Popes, the decrees of the Councils.²

Called positive and speculative or scholastic, according to the method followed in studying it, theology does not confine itself to proposing the truths which are to be believed; it scrutinizes their inmost depths, shows their relations with human reason, and, aided by the resources which true philosophy supplies, explains, develops and adapts them accurately to all the needs of the defense and propagation of the faith. Like Beseleel, to whom the Lord gave His spirit of wisdom, intelligence and knowledge, when intrusting him with the mission of building His temple, the theologian "cuts the precious stones of divine dogma, assorting them skilfully, and, by the setting he gives them, brings out their brilliancy, charm and beauty."³

Rightly, then, does the same Sixtus V. call theology (and here he is referring especially to scholastic theology) a gift from heaven, and ask that it be maintained in the schools and cultivated with great ardor, as being abundant in fruitfulness for the Church.

Is it necessary to add that the book par excellence in which students may with most profit study scholastic theology is the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas? It is our wish, therefore, that professors be sure to explain to all their pupils its method, as well as the principal articles relating to Catholic faith.

We recommend equally that all seminarists have in their hands, and frequently peruse, that golden book known as the Catechism of the Council of Trent, or Roman Catechism, dedicated to all priests invested with the pastoral office (*Catechismus ad Parochos*). **Noted**

¹ Const. Apost. Triumphantis Jerusalem. ² St. Vinc. Lit. Commonit. c. 2. ³ Same Const. Apost.

both for the abundance and accuracy of its teaching and for elegance of style, this catechism is a precious summary of the whole of the-ology, dogmatic and moral. The priest who knows it thoroughly has always at his disposal resources which will enable him to preach with fruit, to acquit himself fitly in the important ministry of the confessional and the direction of souls, and be in a position to refute triumphantly the objections of unbelievers.

With regard to the study of the Holy Scriptures, we call your attention once more, Venerable Brothers, to the teachings we laid down in our Encyclical "*Providentissimus Deus*,"¹ which we wish the professors to put before their disciples, with the necessary explanations. They will put them specially on their guard against the disturbing tendencies which it is sought to introduce into the interpretation of the Bible, and which would shortly, were they to prevail, bring about the ruin of its inspiration and supernatural character. Under the specious pretext of depriving the adversaries of the revealed word of apparently irrefutable arguments against the authenticity and veracity of the Holy Books, some Catholic writers have thought it a clever idea to adopt those arguments for themselves. By these strange and perilous tactics they have worked to make a breach with their own hands in the walls of the city they were charged to defend. In our Encyclical above quoted, and in another document,² we have spoken our mind on this rash, dangerous policy. While encouraging our exegetists to keep abreast with the progress of criticism, we have firmly maintained the principles which have been sanctioned in this matter by the traditional authority of the Fathers and Councils, and renewed in our own time by the Council of the Vatican.

The history of the Church is like a mirror, which reflects the life of the Church through the ages. It proves, better far than civil and profane history, the sovereign liberty of God and His providential action on the march of events. They who study it must never lose sight of the fact that it contains a body of dogmatic facts which none may call in question. That ruling, supernatural idea which presides over the destinies of the Church is at the same time the torch whose light illumines her history. Still, inasmuch as the Church, which continues among men the life of the Word Incarnate, is composed of a divine and a human element, this latter must be expounded by teachers and studied by disciples with great probity. "God has no need of our lies," as we are told in the Book of Job.³

The Church historian will be all the better equipped to bring out her divine origin, superior as this is to all conceptions of a merely

¹ 18 November, 1893. ² Letter to the Min. Gen. of the Fr. Minor, November 25, 1898. ³ Job xiii., 77.

terrestrial and natural order, the more loyal he is in naught extenuating of the trails which the faults of her children, and at times even of her ministers, have brought upon the Spouse of Christ during the course of centuries. Studied in this way, the history of the Church constitutes by itself a magnificent and conclusive demonstration of the truth and divinity of Christianity.

Lastly, to finish the cycle of studies by which candidates for the priesthood should prepare themselves for their future ministry, mention must be made of Canon Law, or the science of the laws and jurisprudence of the Church. This science is connected by very close and logical ties with that of Theology, which it applies practically to all that concerns the government of the Church, the dispensation of holy things, the rights and duties of her ministers, the use of temporal goods which she needs for the accomplishment of her mission. "Without a knowledge of Canon Law (as the Fathers of one of your provincial councils very well said), theology is imperfect, incomplete, like a man with only one arm. Ignorance of Canon Law has favored the birth and diffusion of numerous errors about the rights of the Roman Pontiffs and of Bishops, and about the powers which the Church derives from her own Constitution—powers whose exercise she adapts to circumstances."¹

We shall sum up all we have just said concerning your junior and senior seminaries in this sentence of St. Paul, which we recommend to the frequent meditation of the masters and pupils of your ecclesiastical athenæums: "O Timothy, carefully guard the deposit which has been confided to you. Fly the profane novelties of words and objections which cover themselves with the false names of science, for all they who have made profession of them have erred in the faith."²

And now we have a word to say to you, dearly beloved sons, who have been ordained priests and become the coöperators of your Bishops. We know, and the whole world knows with us, the qualities which distinguish you. There is no good work of which you are not the inspiration or the apostles. Docile to the counsels we gave you in the Encyclical "*Rerum Novarum*," you go to the people, to the workers, to the poor. You endeavor by all means in your power to help them, raise them in the moral scale, render their lot less hard. To this end you form reunions and congresses; you establish homes, clubs, rural banks, aid and employment offices for the toilers. You labor to introduce reforms into economic and social life, and in the difficult enterprise you do not hesitate to make serious sacrifices of time and money; and with the same scope you

¹ Conc. Prov., Bituræ. 1868. ² I. Tim. vi., 20-21

write books and articles in the newspapers and reviews. All these are, in themselves, highly praiseworthy, and in them you give no equivocal proofs of good will and of intelligent and generous devotedness to relieve the most pressing needs of contemporary society and of souls.

Still, beloved sons, we deem it our duty paternally to call your attention to some fundamental principles to which you will not fail to conform if you desire that your activity be really fruitful and reproductive.

Remember, above all, that zeal, to be profitable and praiseworthy, must be "accompanied by discretion, rectitude and purity." Thus does the grave and judicious Thomas à Kempis express himself.¹ Before him St. Bernard, the glory of your country in the twelfth century, that indefatigable apostle of all great causes touching the honor of God, the rights of the Church or the good of souls, did not fear to say that "zeal, separated from knowledge and from the spirit of discernment or discretion, is insupportable . . . that the more ardent zeal is, the more necessary is it that it be accompanied by that discretion which puts order into the exercise of charity and without which even virtue may be changed into a defect and a principle of disorder."² And discretion in activity and in the choice of means of rendering activity successful is all the more indispensable from the fact that the present times are disturbed and environed with numerous difficulties. This or that act, measure or practice, suggested by zeal, while excellent in themselves, can only—owing to the circumstances of the race—produce bad results. Priests will avoid this inconvenience and this evil, if before and during their action they take care to conform to established order and the rules of discipline. And ecclesiastical discipline demands union among the different members of the hierarchy, and the respect and obedience of inferiors to their superiors. In our recent letter to the Archbishop of Tours we said the same thing: "The edifice of the Church of which God Himself is the architect, rests on a very visible foundation, primarily on the authority of Peter and his successors, but also on the Apostles and the successors of the Apostles, the Bishops, so that to hear their voice or to despise it is tantamount to hearing or despising Jesus Christ Himself."³

Listen, then, to the words addressed by St. Ignatius, the great martyr of Antioch, to the clergy of the primitive Church: "Let all obey their Bishops, as Jesus Christ obeyed His Father. In all things touching the sense of the Church do nothing without your Bishop, and as our Lord did nothing but in close union with His

¹ *Zelus animarum laudandus est si sit discretus, rectus et purus.* ² St. Bern. *Serm. XLIX.*, in *Cant. n. 5.* ³ *Lett. ad Arch. Turon.*

Father, so priests, do you nothing without your Bishop. Let all members of the priestly body be united, as all the strings of a harp are united in the instrument."¹

Should you, on the contrary, act as priests independently of this submission to and union with your Bishops, we would repeat to you the words of our predecessor, Gregory XVI., viz., that "you utterly destroy, as far as in you lies, the order established with a most wise forethought by God, the author of the Church."²

Remember, too, beloved sons, that the Church is rightly compared to an army in battle array "*sicut castrorum acies ordinata*,"³ because it is her mission to combat the enemies, visible and invisible, of God and men's souls. Wherefore did St. Paul recommend Timothy to bear himself "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ?"⁴ Now, that which constitutes the strength of an army and contributes most to its victory is discipline and the exact and rigorous obedience of all toward those in command.

Just here zeal out of place and without discretion may easily become the cause of real disaster. Call to mind one of the most memorable facts of sacred history. Certainly neither courage, willingness, nor devotion to the sacred cause of religion were lacking in those priests who gathered round Judas Maccabeus, to fight with him against the enemies of the true God, the profaners of the temple, the oppressors of their nation. And yet, releasing themselves from the rules of discipline, they rashly engaged in a combat in which they were vanquished. The Holy Spirit tells us of them "that they were not of the race of those who might save Israel." Why? Because they would obey only their own inspirations, and threw themselves forward without awaiting the orders of their leaders. "*In die illa ceciderunt sacerdotes in bello, dum volunt fortiter facere, dum sine consilio exeunt in praelium.*"⁵ *Ipsi autem non erant de semine virorum illorum, per quos salus facta est in Israel.*"⁶

On this point our enemies may serve us for an example. They are well aware that union is strength, "*vis unita fortior*," so they do not fail to unite close when it comes to attacking the holy Church of Jesus Christ.

If, then, you desire, as you certainly do, beloved sons, that in the formidable contest being waged against the Church by anti-Christian sects and by the city of the evil one, the victory be for God and His Church, it is absolutely necessary for you to fight all together in perfect order and discipline under the command of your hierarchical leaders. Pay no heed to those pernicious men who, though call-

¹ St. Ign. Ant., *Ep. ad Smyrna*, 8; *idem ad Magn.*, vii. ² Greg. XVI., *Epist. Encycl.* 15 Aug. 1862. ³ *Cant.* vi., 3. ⁴ II. Tim. ii., 3. ⁵ I. Macc. vii., 67. ⁶ I. Macc. vi., 62.

ing themselves Christians and Catholics, throw tares into the field of the Lord and sow division in His Church by attacking and often even calumniating the Bishops "established by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God."¹ Read neither their pamphlets nor their papers. No good priest should in any way lend authority either to their ideas or to their license of speech. Can he ever forget that on the day of his ordination he promised "*obedientiam et reverentiam*" to his Bishop before the holy altar?

Above all things, remember, beloved sons, that an indispensable condition of true zeal and the best pledge of success in the works to which hierarchical obedience consecrates you is purity and holiness of life. "Jesus began by practicing before preaching."² Like Him, the priest must preface preaching by word by preaching by example. "Separated from the world and its concerns (say the Fathers of the Council of Trent), clerics have been placed on a height where they are visible and the faithful look into their lives as into a mirror to know what they are to imitate. Hence clerics and all they whom God has called specially to His service should so regulate their actions and morals that there may be nothing in their deportment, manners, movements, words and in all the other details of their life which is not deeply impressed with religion. They must carefully avoid faults which, though trivial, in others would be very serious to them, in order that there be not a single one of their acts which does not inspire respect in all."³ With these recommendations of the sacred Council, which we would wish, beloved sons, to engrave in all your hearts, those priests who certainly fail to comply, who adopted in their preaching language out of harmony with the dignity of their priesthood and the sacredness of the word of God; who attended popular meetings where their presence could only excite the passions of the wicked and of the enemies of the Church, and who exposed themselves to the grossest insults without profit to any one, and to the astonishment, if not scandal, of the pious faithful; who assumed the habits, manners, conduct and spirit of laymen. Salt must certainly be mingled with the mass which it is to preserve from corruption, but it must at the same time defend itself against the mass under pain of losing all savor and becoming of no use except to be thrown out and trampled under foot.⁴

So, too, the priest who is the salt of the earth must in his necessary contact with the society by which he is surrounded, preserve modesty, gravity and holiness in manner, action and speech, and not allow himself to become infected with the levity, dissipation and vanity of the worldly. He must, on the contrary, in the midst of the

Acts xx., 28. ² Act i., 1. ³ S. Conc. Trid., Sess. xxii., de Ref., c. 1. ⁴ Matt. v., 13.

men, keep his soul so united with God that he lose nothing of the spirit of his holy state, and be not constrained to make before God and his conscience the sad and humiliating avowal: "I never go among laymen that I do not return less a priest."

Is it not because they have, with a zeal that is presumptive, set aside those traditional rules of discretion, modesty and prudence that certain priests consider as out of date and incompatible with "the present needs of the ministry those principles of discipline and conduct which they received from their masters in the senior seminary?" They are to be seen rushing, as if by instinct, into the most perilous innovations in speech, manners and associations. Several of them, alas! rashly putting themselves on the slippery incline from which they have no native power to escape, and despising the charitable warnings of their superiors and their older and more experienced colleagues, have ended in apostasies which rejoice the hearts of the adversaries of the Church and brought bitterest tears into the eyes of their Bishops, their brothers in the priesthood and the pious faithful. St. Augustine tells us: "When a man is out of the right way the more quickly and impetuously he advances, the more he errs."¹

There are, of course, some changes which are advantageous and calculated to advance the kingdom of God in men's souls and in society. But, as the Holy Gospel tells us,² it is the province of the "Father of the household" and not of the children or servants to examine them, and, if he judges well, to give them currency side by side with the time-honored and venerable usages, which make up the rest of his treasury.

Lately when fulfilling the apostolic duty of putting the Catholics of North America on their guard against innovations, tending, among other things, to substitute for the principles of perfection consecrated by the teaching of doctors and the practice of saints moral maxims and rules of life more or less impregnated with that naturalism which nowadays endeavors to penetrate everywhere, we proclaimed aloud that far from repudiating and rejecting "*en bloc*" the progress accomplished in the present epoch, we were only too anxious to welcome all that goes to augment the patrimony of science or to give greater extension to public prosperity. But we took care to add that this progress could be of efficacious service to the good cause only when harmonized with the authority of the Church.³

As a conclusion to this letter we are pleased to apply to the clergy

¹ Enarr. in Ps. xxxi., v. 6. ² Matt. xiii., 58. ³ Epist ad S. R. R. Fr. Card Gibbons, 22 Jan., 1899.

of France what we formerly wrote for the priests of our diocese of Perugia. We reproduce here a portion of the pastoral letter we addressed to them on July 19, 1866:

"We ask the ecclesiastics of our diocese to reflect seriously on their sublime obligations and on the difficult circumstances through which we are passing and to act in such wise that their conduct be in harmony with their duties and always conformable to the rules of an enlightened and prudent zeal. For thus even our enemies will seek in vain for motives of reproach and blame: *qui ex adverso est vereatur nihil habens malum dicere de nobis.*¹

"Although difficulties and dangers are every day multiplying, the pious and fervent priest must not for that be discouraged—he must not abandon his duties or even draw rein in the accomplishment of the spiritual mission he has received for the welfare and salvation of mankind and for the maintenance of that august religion of which he is herald and minister. For it is especially by difficulties and trials that his virtue becomes strong and stable; it is in the greatest misfortunes, in the midst of political transformations and social upheavals that the salutary and civilizing influence of his ministry shines forth with greatest brilliancy.

" . . . To come down to practice we find a teaching admirably adapted to the circumstances in the four maxims which the great Apostle St. Paul gave to his disciple Titus. In all things give good example by your works, your doctrine, the integrity of your life, by the gravity of your conduct, using none but holy and blameless language.² We would that each and every member of our clergy meditate on these maxims and conform his conduct thereto.

"*In omnibus teipsum præbe exemplum bonorum operum.* In all things give an example of good works; that is, of active and exemplary life, animated by a true spirit of charity and guided by the maxims of evangelical prudence—of a life of sacrifice and toil, consecrated to the welfare of your neighbors, not with earthly views or for a perishable reward, but with a supernatural object. Give an example by that language at once simple, noble and lofty, by that sound and blameless discourse which confounds all human opposition, calms the long standing hatred the world has sworn against you, and wins for you the respect and even esteem of the enemies of religion. Every one devoted to the service of the sanctuary has been at all times obliged to show himself a living model and perfect exemplar of all the virtues; but this obligation becomes all the more instant when, as a consequence of social upheavals, we are

¹ Tit. ii., 8.

² Tit. ii., 7, 8.

treading a difficult and uncertain path where we may at every step discover ambushes and pretexts of attack. . . .

"In doctrina. In the face of the combined efforts of incredulity and heresy to consummate the ruin of Catholic faith, it would be a real crime for the clergy to remain in a state of hesitancy and inactivity. In such an outpouring of error and conflict of opinion he must not prove faithless to his mission, which is to defend dogma assaulted, morality travestied and justice frequently outraged. It is for him to oppose himself as a barrier to the attacks of error and the deceits of heresy; to watch the tactics of the wicked who war on the faith and honor of this Catholic country; to unmask their plots and reveal their ambushes; to warn the confiding, strengthen the timid and open the eyes of the blinded. Superficial erudition or merely common knowledge will not suffice for all this—there is need of study, solid, profound and continuous, in a word of a mass of doctrinal knowledge sufficient to cope with the subtlety and remarkable cunning of our modern opponents. . . .

"In integritate. No better proof of the importance of this council could be had than the sad evidence of what is going on around us. Do we not observe that the lax life of some ecclesiastics brings discredit and contempt on their ministry and proves the occasion of scandals? If men, endowed with minds as brilliant as they are remarkable, now and then desert the ranks of the sacred soldiery and rise in revolt against the Church—that mother who, in her tenderness and affection had advanced them to the direction and for the salvation of souls, their defection and wanderings have most frequently had their origin in want of discipline and evilness of life. . . .

"In gravitate. By gravity is to be understood that serious, judicious, tactful conduct which should be characteristic of every faithful and prudent minister chosen by God for the government of His family. While thanking God for having vouchsafed to raise him to this honor, he must show himself faithful to all his obligations, and at the same time balanced and prudent in all his actions; he must not allow himself to be dominated by base passions, nor carried away by violent and exaggerated language; he must lovingly sympathize with the misfortunes and weaknesses of others; do all the good he can to every one, disinterestedly, unostentatiously, and maintaining ever intact the honor of his character and sublime dignity."

We return now to you, beloved sons in the French clergy, and we are firmly convinced that our perceptions and counsels, solely inspired as they are by our paternal affection, will be understood and

received by you in the sense and bearing we wished to give them in addressing you this letter.

We expect much from you, because God has richly endowed you with all the gifts and qualities necessary for performing great and holy deeds for the advantage of the Church and society. We would that not one among you permit himself to be tarnished by those imperfections which dim the splendor of the sacerdotal character and injure its efficacy.

The present times are evil; the future is still more gloomy and menacing, and seems to herald the approach of a redoubtable crisis and social upheaval. It behooves us, then, as we have said on many occasions, to honor the salutary principles of religion, as well as those of justice, charity, respect and duty. It is for us to imbue men's souls with these principles—and especially those souls which have become captive to infidelity or disturbed by destroying passions, to bring about the reign of the grace and peace of our Divine Redeemer, Who is the Light and the Resurrection and the Life, and in Him to unite all men, notwithstanding the inevitable social distinctions which divide them.

Yes, now more than ever, is there need of the help and devotedness of exemplary priests, full of faith, discretion and zeal, who, taking inspiration from the gentleness and energy of Jesus Christ, Whose true ambassadors they are, "*pro Christo legatione fungimur*,"¹ to announce with a courageous and inexhaustible patience the eternal truths which are seldom fruitless of virtue in men's souls.

Their ministry will be laborious—oftentimes even painful, especially in countries where the people are absorbed in worldly interests and live in forgetfulness of God and His holy religion. But the enlightened, charitable and unwearying influence of the priest fortified by Divine grace will work, as it has already worked, prodigies of resurrection almost beyond belief.

With all our soul and with unspeakable joy we hail this consoling vista, and meanwhile with all the affection of our heart we grant the Apostolic Benediction to you, venerable brothers, and to the clergy and people of France.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 8th of September, in the year 1899, the twenty-second of our Pontificate.

LEO, PP. XIII.

¹ II. Cor. v., 20.