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ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF OUR HOLY FATHER PIUS X.

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE.

TO THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS AND  
OTHER ORDINARIES IN PEACE AND COMMUNION  
WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE.

*Venerable Brethren, Health and the Apostolic Blessing:*

**A**N interval of a few months will again bring round that most happy day on which, fifty years ago, our predecessor, Pius IX., of holy memory, surrounded by a splendid throng of Cardinals and Bishops, pronounced and promulgated with the authority of the infallible magisterium, as a truth revealed by God that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception was free from all stain of original sin. All the world knows the feelings with which the faithful of every nation of the earth received this proclamation and the manifestations of public satisfaction and joy which greeted it; for truly there has not been in the memory of man any more universal or more harmonious expression of sentiment shown towards the august Mother of God or the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

And, Venerable Brethren, why should we not hope to-day after the lapse of half a century, when we renew the memory of the

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Immaculate Virgin, that an echo of that holy joy will be awakened in our minds, and that the magnificent scenes of that distant day, of faith and of love towards the august Mother of God, will be repeated? Of all this we are, indeed, made ardently desirous by the devotion, united with supreme gratitude for favors received, which we have always cherished toward the Blessed Virgin; and we have a sure pledge of the fulfilment of our desires in the fervor of all Catholics, ready and willing as they are to multiply their testimonies of love and reverence for the great Mother of God. But we must not omit to say that this desire of ours is especially stimulated by a sort of secret instinct which prompts us to regard as not far distant the fulfilment of those great hopes, assuredly not unfounded, which the solemn promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception gave rise to in the minds of Pius, our predecessor, and of all the Bishops of the world.

Many, it is true, lament the fact that until now these hopes have been unfulfilled, and are prone to repeat the words of Jeremias: "We looked for peace and no good came; for a time of healing, and behold fear." (Jeremias viii., 15.) But all such will be certainly rebuked as "men of little faith," who make no effort to penetrate the works of God or to estimate them in the light of truth. For who can number the secret gifts of grace which God has bestowed upon His Church through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin throughout this period? And even overlooking these gifts, what is to be said of the Vatican Council so opportunely convoked; or of the dogma of Papal Infallibility promulgated in time to meet the errors that were about to arise; or, finally, of that new and unprecedented fervor with which the faithful of all classes and of every nation have long been wending their way hither to venerate in person the Vicar of Christ? Surely the Providence of God has shown itself admirably in our two predecessors, Pius and Leo, who with such great holiness ruled the Church in most turbulent times through a length of Pontificate conceded to no other before them. Then, again, no sooner had Pius IX. proclaimed as a dogma of Catholic faith the exemption of Mary from the original stain, than the Virgin herself began in Lourdes those wonderful manifestations, followed by the vast and magnificent movements which have resulted in those two temples dedicated to the Immaculate Mother, where the prodigies which still continue to take place through her intercession furnish splendid arguments against the incredulity of our days.

Witnesses, then, as we are of all these great benefits which God has granted through the benign influence of the Virgin in those fifty years now about to be completed, why should we not believe

that our salvation is nearer than we thought; all the more so since we know from experience that, in the dispensations of Divine Providence, when evils reach their limit, deliverance is not far distant? "Her time is near at hand, and her days shall not be prolonged. For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob and will choose one out of Israel." (Isaias xiv., 1.) Wherefore the hope we cherish is not a vain one, that we, too, may before long repeat: "The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked; the rod of the rulers. The whole earth is quiet and still; it is glad and hath rejoiced." (Isaias xiv., 5, 7.)

But the first and chief reason, Venerable Brethren, why the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception should excite a singular fervor in the souls of Christians lies in that restoration of all things in Christ which we have already set forth in our first Encyclical letter. For can any one fail to see that there is no surer or more direct road than by Mary for uniting all mankind in Christ and obtaining through Him the perfect adoption of sons, that we may be holy and immaculate in the sight of God? For if to Mary it was truly said: "Blessed art thou who hast believed, because in thee shall be fulfilled the things that have been told thee by the Lord" (Luke i., 45); or in other words, that she would conceive and bring forth the Son of God; and if she did receive in her womb Him who is by nature Truth itself in order that "He, generated in a new order, and with a new nativity, though invisible in Himself, might become visible in our flesh:"<sup>1</sup> the Son of God made man, being the "author and finisher of faith," it surely follows that His Mother most holy should be recognized as participating in the divine mysteries and as being in a manner the guardian of them, and that upon her as upon a foundation, the noblest after Christ, rises the edifice of the faith of all centuries.

How think otherwise? God could have given us the Redeemer of the human race, and the Founder of the Faith, in another way than through the Virgin, but since Divine Providence has been pleased that we should have the Man-God through Mary, who conceived Him by the Holy Ghost and bore Him in her womb, it only remains for us to receive Christ from the hands of Mary. Hence wherever the Scriptures *prophesy of the grace which was to come in us* the Redeemer of mankind is almost invariably presented to us as united with His Mother. The Lamb that is to rule the world will be sent—but He will be sent from the rock of the desert; the flower will blossom, but it will blossom from the root of Jesse. Adam, the father of mankind, looked to Mary crushing the serpent's head,

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<sup>1</sup> St. Leo the Great, Ser. 2, De Nativ. Dom.

and he restrained the tears which the malediction brought into his eyes; Noë thought of her when shut up in the ark of safety, and Abraham when prevented from the slaying of his son; Jacob at the sight of the ladder on which angels ascended and descended; Moses amazed at the sight of the bush which burned but was not consumed; David escorting the ark of God with dancing and psalmody; Elias as he looked at the little cloud that rose out of the sea. In fine, after Christ, we find in Mary the end of the law and the fulfilment of the figures and oracles.

And it cannot be doubted that through the Virgin, and through her more than through any other means, we have a way of reaching the knowledge of Jesus Christ offered to us when it is remembered that with her alone of all others Jesus for thirty years was united, as it behooves a son to be united with his mother, in the closest ties of intimacy and domestic life. Who more than His Mother could have a far-reaching knowledge of the admirable mysteries of the birth and childhood of Christ, and above all of the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the beginning and the foundation of faith? She not only *kept in her heart* the events of Bethlehem and what took place in Jerusalem in the Temple of the Lord, but sharing as she did the thoughts and the secret wishes of Christ she may be said to have lived the very life of her Son. Hence nobody ever knew Christ so profoundly as she did, and nobody can ever be more competent as a guide and teacher of the knowledge of Christ.

Hence it follows, as we have already pointed out, that the Virgin is more powerful than all others as a means of uniting mankind with Christ. Hence, too, since, according to Christ Himself "Now this is eternal life: That they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John xvii., 3), and since it is through Mary that we attain to the knowledge of Christ, through Mary also we most easily obtain that life of which Christ is the source and origin.

And if we consider ever so little how many and powerful are the reasons which prompt this most holy Mother to bestow on us these precious gifts, oh, how our hopes will be expanded!

For is not Mary the Mother of Christ? Then she is our Mother also. And we must in truth hold that Christ, the Word made Flesh, is also the Saviour of mankind. He had a material body like that of any other man; and as Saviour of the human family, he had a spiritual and mystical body, the society, namely, of those who believe in Christ. "We are many, but one sole body in Christ." (Rom. xii., 5.) Now the Blessed Virgin did not conceive the Eternal Son of God merely in order that He might be made man, taking His human nature from her, but also in order that by means of the

nature assumed from her He might be the Redeemer of men. For which reason the Angel said to the Shepherds: "To-day there is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." (Luke ii., 11.) Wherefore in the same holy bosom of His most chaste Mother, Christ took to Himself flesh, and united to Himself the spiritual body formed by those who were to believe in Him. Hence Mary, carrying the Saviour within her, may be said to have also carried all those whose life was contained in the life of the Saviour. Therefore all we who are united to Christ, and as the Apostle says, are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Ephesians v., 30) have issued from the womb of Mary like a body united to its head. Hence then in a spiritual and mystical fashion, we are all children of Mary, and she is Mother of us all; "the Mother, spiritually indeed, but truly the Mother of the members of Christ, who we are."<sup>2</sup>

If, then, the most Blessed Virgin is the Mother at once of God and men, who can doubt that she will endeavor with all diligence to procure that Christ, "the Head of the Body of the Church" (Colossians i., 18), may transfuse His gifts into us, His members, and above all know Him and "live by Him?" (I. John iv., 9.)

Moreover, it was not only the glory of the Mother of God "to have presented to God the Only Begotten who was to be born of human members"<sup>3</sup> the material by which He was prepared as a Victim for the salvation of mankind, but hers also the office of tending and nourishing that Victim and at the appointed time of offering Him at the altar. Hence that never dissociated manner of life and labors of the Son and the Mother which permits the application to both of the words of the Psalmist: "My life is consumed in sorrow and my years in groans." (Psalm xxx., 11.) When the supreme hour of the Son came, beside the Cross of Jesus there stood Mary His Mother not merely occupied in contemplating the cruel spectacle, but rejoicing that her Only Son was offered for the salvation of mankind; and so entirely participating in His Passion that, if it had been possible, "she would have gladly borne all the torments that her Son underwent."<sup>4</sup> From this community of will and suffering between Christ and Mary "she merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world"<sup>5</sup> and Dispensatrix of all the gifts that Our Saviour purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood.

It cannot, of course, be denied that the dispensing of these treasures is the particular and peculiar right of Jesus Christ, for they

<sup>2</sup> S. Augustine L. de S. Virginitate, c. 6.

<sup>3</sup> S. Bede Ven. L. iv. in Luc. xl.

<sup>4</sup> S. Bonaventure I. Sent. d. 48, ad Litt, dub. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Eadmeri Mon. De Excellentia Virg. Mariæ, c. 9.

are the exclusive fruit of His Death, who by His nature is the mediator between God and man. Nevertheless, by this union in sorrow and suffering, as we have said, which existed between the Mother and the Son, it has been allowed to the august Virgin "to be the most powerful mediatrix and advocate of the whole world with her Divine Son."<sup>6</sup> The source, then, is Jesus Christ, "of whose fulness we have all received" (John i., 16), "from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity." (Ephesians iv., 16.) But Mary, as St. Bernard justly remarks, is the *channel*;<sup>7</sup> or, if you will, that connecting portion by which the body is joined to the head and by which the head exerts its power and its virtue: "For she is the neck of our Head by which He communicates to His Mystical body all spiritual gifts."<sup>8</sup>

We are thus, it will be seen, very far from declaring the Mother of God to be the author of supernatural grace which belongs to God alone; but since she surpassed all in holiness and union with Christ, and has been associated by Christ in the work of redemption, she, as the expression is, merits *de congruo* what Christ merits *de condigno*, and is the principal minister in the distribution of grace. "He sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews i., 3); but Mary sitteth as a Queen on His right hand, the securest refuge of those who are in peril, as well as the most faithful of helpers, so that we have naught to fear, or despair of as long as "she is our guide and our patroness; while she is propitious and protects."<sup>9</sup>

With these principles laid down and returning to our subject, will it not appear to all that it is right and proper to affirm that Mary whom Jesus made His assiduous companion from the house of Nazareth to the *place of Calvary* knew as none other knew the secrets of His Heart; distributes as by a mother's right the treasures of His merits; and is the surest help to the knowledge and love of Christ? They prove it only too truly who by their deplorable manner of life deceived by false teaching or the wiles of the devil fancy they can dispense with the aid of the Virgin Mother. Miserable and unhappy are they who neglect her on the pretence that thus they honor Christ. They forget that *the child is not found without Mary His Mother*.

Under these circumstances, Venerable Brethren, such is the end which all the solemnities that are everywhere being prepared in

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<sup>6</sup> Pius IX., "Ineffabilis."

<sup>7</sup> Serm. de temp on the Nativ. B. V. De Aquæductu, n. 4.

<sup>8</sup> St. Bernardin. Sen. Quadrag. de Evangel. ætern. Serm. X.

<sup>9</sup> Pius IX., Bulla "Ineffabilis."

honor of the holy and Immaculate Conception of Mary should have in view. No homage is more agreeable to her, none is sweeter to her than that we should know and really love Jesus Christ. Let, then, crowds fill the churches—let solemn feasts be celebrated and public rejoicings be made. Such manifestations are eminently suited for enlivening our faith. But unless heart and will be added, they will all be empty forms; mere appearances of piety. At such a spectacle, the Virgin, borrowing the words of Jesus Christ, would address us with the just reproach: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." (Matthew xv., 8.)

For to be genuine our piety towards the Mother of God ought to spring from the heart; external acts have neither utility nor value if the acts of the soul have no part in them. Now these latter can only have one object, which is that we should fully carry out what the divine Son of Mary commands. For if true love alone has the power to unite the wills of men, it is of prime necessity that we should have one will with Mary to serve Jesus our Lord. What this most prudent Virgin said to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana she addresses also to us: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." (John ii., 5.) Now here is the word of Jesus Christ: "If you would enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matthew xix., 17.) Let then each one fully convince himself of this, that if his piety towards the Blessed Virgin does not hinder him from sinning, or does not move his will to amend an evil life, it is a deceptive and lying piety, wanting as it is in proper effect and in its natural fruit.

If any one desires a confirmation of this it may easily be found in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. For leaving aside tradition which, as well as Scripture, is a source of truth, whence has this conviction of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin shown itself in every age to be so much in keeping with the Christian instinct as to appear fixed and innate in the hearts of the faithful? We shrink with horror from saying, as Denis the Carthusian so well expresses it, that "this woman who was to crush the head of the serpent should have been crushed by him and that the Mother of God should have ever been a daughter of the Evil One."<sup>10</sup> No, to the Christian intelligence the idea is unthinkable that the flesh of Christ, holy, stainless, innocent, was formed in the womb of Mary of a flesh which had ever, if only for the briefest moment, contracted any stain. And why so, but because an infinite opposition separates God from sin? There certainly we have the origin of the conviction common to all Christians that before Jesus Christ, clothed in human nature, cleansed us from our sins in His

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<sup>10</sup> Sent. d. 3, q. 1.

blood, He accorded Mary the grace and special privilege of being preserved and exempted, from the first moment of her conception, from all stain of original sin.

If, then, God has such a horror of sin as to have willed to keep the future Mother of His Son not only free from the stains which are voluntarily contracted; but, by a special favor and in prevision of the merits of Jesus Christ, from that other stain of which the sad sign is transmitted to all the children of Adam by a sort of hapless heritage, who can doubt that it is a duty for every one who desires to deserve well of Mary by his homage to correct his vicious and depraved habits and subdue the passions which incite him to evil?

Whoever, moreover, wishes, and no one ought not so to wish, that his devotion should be perfect and worthy of her, should go further and strive might and main to imitate her example. It is a divine law that those only attain everlasting happiness who have by such faithful following reproduced in themselves the form of the patience and sanctity of Jesus Christ: "for whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren." (Romans viii., 29.) But such generally is our infirmity that we are easily discouraged by the greatness of such an example. By the providence of God, however, another example is proposed to us, which is both as near to Christ as human nature allows, and more nearly accords with the weakness of our nature. And this is no other than that of the Mother of God. "Such was Mary," very pertinently points out St. Ambrose, "that her life is an example for all." And, therefore, he rightly concludes: "Have then before your eyes, as an image, the virginity and life of Mary from whom as from a mirror shines forth the brightness of chastity and the form of virtue."<sup>11</sup>

Now if it becomes children not to omit the imitation of any of the virtues of this most Blessed Mother, we yet wish that the faithful apply themselves by preference to the principal virtues which are, as it were, the nerves and joints of the Christian life—we mean faith, hope and charity towards God and our neighbor. Although no part of the life of Mary fails to show the brilliant character of these virtues, yet they attained their highest degree of splendor at the time when she stood by her dying Son. Jesus is nailed to the cross, and He is reproached with maledictions for having "made Himself the Son of God." (John xix., 7.) But she unceasingly recognized and adored the divinity in Him. She bore His dead body to the tomb, but never for a moment doubted that He would rise again. Then the love of God with which she burned made

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<sup>11</sup> De Virginit. L. II., c. II.

her a partaker in the sufferings of Christ and the associate in His passion; with Him, moreover, as if forgetful of her own sorrow, she prayed for the pardon of the executioners, although they in their hate cried out: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." (Matthew xxvii., 25.)

But lest it be thought that we have lost sight of our subject, which is the Immaculate Conception, what great and opportune help will be found in it for the preservation and right development of those same virtues! What in fact is the starting point of the enemies of religion in spreading the great and grievous errors by which the faith of so many is shaken? They begin by denying that man has fallen by sin and has been cast down from his primal state. Hence they regard as mere fables original sin and the evils that were its consequence. Humanity, vitiated in its source, vitiated in its turn the whole race of man; and thus was evil introduced amongst men and the necessity for a Redeemer involved. Rejecting all this it is easy to understand that no place is left for Christ, for the Church, for grace or for anything that is above and beyond nature; in a word the whole edifice of faith is shaken from top to bottom. But let the people believe and confess that the Virgin Mary has been from the first moment of her conception preserved from all stain; and it is straightway necessary to admit both original sin and the rehabilitation of the human race by Jesus Christ, the Gospel and the Church and the law of suffering. Thus Rationalism and Materialism will be torn up by the roots and destroyed, and there will be given to the teaching of Christianity the glory of guarding and protecting the truth. It is, moreover, a vice common to the enemies of the faith of our time especially, that they repudiate and proclaim the necessity of repudiating all respect and obedience for the authority of the Church, and even of any human power, in the idea that it will thus be more easy to make an end of faith. Here we have the origin of anarchism, than which nothing is more pernicious and destructive to both the natural and supernatural order. Now this evil, which is equally fatal to society at large and to Christianity, is done away with by the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by the obligation which it imposes of recognizing in the Church a power before which not only the will but the intelligence has to subject itself. It is because of such subjection of the reason that Christians sing the praise of the Mother of God: "Thou art all fair, O Mary, and the stain of original sin is not in thee."<sup>12</sup> And thus once again is justified what the Church attributes to this august Virgin that she has exterminated all heresies in the world.

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<sup>12</sup> *Mass of Immac. Concep.*

And if, as the Apostle declares, "faith is nothing else than the substance of things to be hoped for" (Hebrews xi., 1) every one will easily grant that our faith is confirmed and our hope aroused and strengthened by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. The Virgin was kept the more free from all stain of original sin because she was to be the Mother of Christ, and she was the Mother of Christ that the hope of everlasting happiness might be born again in our souls.

Leaving aside charity towards God, who can contemplate the Immaculate Virgin without feeling moved to fulfil that precept which Christ called peculiarly His own, namely, that of loving one another as He loved us? "A great sign," thus the Apostle St. John describes a vision divinely sent him that appeared in the heavens: "A woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars upon her head." (Apocalypse xii., 1.) Every one knows that this woman signified the Virgin Mary, the stainless one who brought forth our Head. The Apostle continues: "And, being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered." (Apocalypse xii., 2.) John therefore saw the Most Holy Mother of God already in eternal happiness, yet travailing in a mysterious childbirth. What birth was it? Surely it was the birth of us who, still in exile, are yet to be generated to the perfect charity of God, and to eternal happiness. And the birth pains show the love and desire with which the Virgin from heaven above watches over us, and strives with unwearied prayer to bring about the completion of the number of the elect.

This same charity we desire that all should earnestly endeavor to attain, taking advantage of the extraordinary feasts in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Oh how bitterly and fiercely is Jesus Christ now being persecuted, as well as the most holy religion which He founded! And how grave is the peril that threatens many of being drawn away to abandon the faith by the errors that are spread broadcast! "Then let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (I. Corinthians x., 12.) And let all, with humble prayer and entreaty, implore of God, through the intercession of Mary, that those who have abandoned the truth may repent. We know, indeed, from experience that such prayer, born of charity and trust in the Virgin, has never been vain. True, even in the future the strife against the Church will never cease, "for there must be also heresies, that they also who are reprov'd may be made manifest among you." (I. Corinthians xi., 19.) But neither will the Virgin ever cease to succor us in our trials, however grave they be, and to carry on the fight fought by

her since her conception, so that every day we may repeat: "To-day the head of the serpent of old was crushed by her."<sup>13</sup>

In order that heavenly graces may help us more abundantly than usual during this year to honor and to imitate the Blessed Virgin, and that thus we may more easily secure our object of restoring all things in Christ, we have determined, after the example of our predecessors at the beginning of their Pontificates, to grant to the Catholic world an extraordinary indulgence in the form of a jubilee.

Wherefore, confiding in the mercy of Almighty God and in the authority of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, by virtue of that power of binding and loosing which, unworthy though we are, the Lord has given us, we do concede and impart the most plenary indulgence of all their sins to the faithful, all and several of both sexes, dwelling in this our beloved city, or coming into it, who from the first Sunday in Lent, that is from the 21st of February, to the second day of June, the solemnity of the Most Sacred Body of Christ inclusively, shall three times visit one of the four Patriarchal basilicas, and there for some time pray God for the liberty and exaltation of the Catholic Church and this Apostolic See, for the extirpation of the heresies and the conversion of all who are in error, for the concord of Christian Princes and the peace and unity of all the faithful, and according to our intention; and who, within the said period, shall fast once, using only meagre fare, excepting the days not included in the Lenten Indult; and, after confessing their sins, shall receive the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist; and to all others, wherever they be, dwelling outside this city, who, within the time above mentioned or during a space of three months, even not continuous, to be definitely appointed by the ordinaries according to the convenience of the faithful, but before the eighth day of December, shall three times visit the cathedral church, if there be one, or, if not, the parish church; or, in the absence of this, the principal church; and shall devoutly fulfil the other works above mentioned. And we do at the same time permit that this indulgence, which is to be gained only once, may be applied in suffrage for the souls which have passed from this life united in charity with God.

We do, moreover, concede that travelers by land or sea may gain the same indulgence immediately on their return to their homes provided they perform the works already indicated.

To confessors approved by their respective ordinaries we grant faculties for commuting the above works enjoined by us for other works of piety, and this concession shall be applicable not only to regulars of both sexes, but to all others who cannot perform the

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<sup>13</sup> Office Immac. Con., II. Vespers, Magnif.

works prescribed, and we do grant faculties also to dispense from Communion children who have not yet been admitted to it.

Moreover, to the faithful, all and several, the laity and the clergy both secular and regular of all orders and institutes, even those calling for special mention, we do grant permission and power, for this sole object, to select any priest, regular or secular, among those actually approved (which faculty may also be used by nuns, novices and other women living in the cloister, provided the confessor they select be one approved for nuns) by whom, when they have confessed to him within the prescribed time with the intention of gaining the present jubilee and of fulfilling all the other works requisite for gaining it, they may on this sole occasion and only in the forum of conscience be absolved from all excommunication, suspension and every other ecclesiastical sentence and censure pronounced or inflicted for any cause by the law or by a judge, including those reserved to the ordinary and to us or to the Apostolic See, even in cases reserved in a special manner to anybody whomsoever and to us and to the Apostolic See; and they may also be absolved from all sin or transgression, even those reserved to the ordinaries themselves and to us and the Apostolic See, on condition, however, that a salutary penance be enjoined together with the other prescriptions of the law, and in the case of heresy after the abjuration and retraction of error as is enjoined by the law; and the said priests may further commute to other pious and salutary works all vows even those taken under oath and reserved to the Apostolic See (except those of chastity, of religion and of obligations which have been accepted by third persons); and with the said penitents, even regulars, in sacred orders such confessors may dispense from all secret irregularities contracted solely by violation of censures affecting the exercise of said orders and promotion to higher orders.

But we do not intend by the present Letters to dispense from any irregularities whatsoever, or from crime or defect, public or private, contracted in any manner through notoriety or other incapacity or inability; nor do we intend to derogate from the Constitution with its accompanying declaration, published by Benedict XIV. of happy memory, which begins with the words *Sacramentum poenitentiae*; nor is it our intention that these present Letters may, or can, in any way avail those who, by us and the Apostolic See, or by any ecclesiastical judge, have been by name excommunicated, suspended, interdicted or declared under other sentences or censures, or who have been publicly denounced, unless they do within the allotted time satisfy, or, when necessary, come to an arrangement with the parties concerned.

To all this we are pleased to add that we do concede and will

that all retain during this time of jubilee the privilege of gaining all other indulgences, not excepting plenary indulgences, which have been granted by our predecessors or by ourself.

We close these Letters, Venerable Brethren, by manifesting anew the great hope we earnestly cherish that through this extraordinary gift of jubilee granted by us under the auspices of the Immaculate Virgin, large numbers of those who are unhappily separated from Jesus Christ may return to Him, and that love of virtue and fervor of devotion may flourish anew among the Christian people. Fifty years ago, when Pius IX. proclaimed as an article of faith the Immaculate Conception of the most Blessed Mother of Christ, it seemed, as we have already said, as if an incredible wealth of grace were poured out upon the earth; and with the increase of confidence in the Virgin Mother of God, the old religious spirit of the people was everywhere greatly augmented. Is it forbidden us to hope for still greater things for the future? True, we are passing through disastrous times, when we may well make our own the lamentation of the Prophet: "There is no truth and no mercy and no knowledge of God on the earth. Blasphemy and lying and homicide and theft and adultery have inundated it." (Osee iv., 1-2.) Yet in the midst of this deluge of evil, the Virgin Most Clement rises before our eyes like a rainbow, as the arbiter of peace between God and man: "I will set my bow in the clouds and it shall be the sign of a covenant between me and between the earth." (Genesis ix., 13.) Let the storm rage and sky darken—not for that shall we be dismayed. "And the bow shall be in the clouds, and I shall see it and shall remember the everlasting covenant." (Genesis ix., 16.) "And there shall no more be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh." (Genesis ix., 15.) Oh, yes, if we trust as we should in Mary, now especially when we are about to celebrate, with more than usual fervor, her Immaculate Conception, we shall recognize in her the Virgin most powerful "who with virginal foot did crush the head of the serpent."<sup>14</sup>

In pledge of these graces, Venerable Brethren, we impart the Apostolic Benediction lovingly in the Lord to you and to your people.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the second day of February, 1904, in the first year of our Pontificate.

PIUS X., POPE.

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<sup>14</sup> *Off. Immac. Conc.*