



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER
MAXIMUM ILLUD
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
BENEDICT XV
TO THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES,
ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS
OF THE CATHOLIC WORLD
ON THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Introduction

1. Before He returned to His Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ addressed to His disciples the words: “Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creation” (*Mk 16:15*). With these words He committed to them a duty, a momentous and a holy charge, that was not to lapse with the death of the Apostles but would bind their successors, one after another, until the end of the world – as long, that is, as there remained on this earth men whom the truth might set free. Entrusted with this mandate, “they went forth and preached everywhere” (*Mk 16:20*) the word of God, so that “through all the earth their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world, their message” (*Ps 18:5*). From that time on, as the centuries have passed, the Church has never forgotten that command God gave her, and never yet has she ceased to dispatch to every corner of the world her couriers of the doctrine He entrusted to her, and her ministers of the eternal salvation that was delivered through Christ to the human race.

Great Apostles of the Gospel

2. Even in the first three centuries, when persecution after persecution, inspired by Hell, fell upon the infant Church in a raging attempt to crush her, even when the whole of civilization was deluged with Christian blood, out on the far frontiers of the Roman Empire the heralds of the Gospel journeyed, announcing their tidings. Then, after peace and religious freedom had been officially granted to the Church, her apostolate to the world made far greater progress. In this achievement,

a number of men of striking sanctity played outstanding roles. One of them was Gregory the Illuminator, who brought the Faith to Armenia. Another was Victorinus, the apostle of Styria. Frumentius, who evangelized Ethiopia, was a third. Later on Patrick brought forth the Irish in Christ; Augustine introduced the Faith among the English; and Columba and Palladius preached the Gospel to the Scots. Later still Clement Willibrord, the first Bishop of Utrecht, brought the radiance of the Gospel to Holland; Boniface and Ansgar carried the Faith to the Germans; and Cyril and Methodius won Slavonia for the Church.

Expansion of Missions

3. With the further passing of time, a far wider field for missionary work began to appear. William of Rubruck pointed it out when he carried the fire of the Faith to the Mongols. Soon afterward Blessed Gregory X sent out the first missionaries to China. Disciples of Francis of Assisi followed them and founded there in China a sizable community of Christians, a community that a short time later, unfortunately, went down under the blows of a persecution.

4. Upon the discovery of America, an army of apostolic men set out for the New World. This great host, which included that glorious son of Saint Dominic, Bartholomew de Las Casas, undertook there the twin tasks of protecting the unfortunate indigenous people from human oppression and wresting them from their grinding subjection to the powers of darkness. To the same period belongs the work of Francis Xavier, a missionary worthy of comparison with the Apostles themselves. For Christ's glory and the salvation of souls, he spent himself relentlessly in the East Indies and in Japan. And when he died he was on the threshold of the Chinese Empire, attempting to enter it. It was as though, by his death, he was breaking open for the Gospel a way into those vast territories that in years to come would be the arena where the sons and daughters of numerous religious orders and missionary congregations would, in the pursuance of their apostolate, contend with all the formidable obstacles thrown against them by shifting conditions and varying circumstances.

Recent History

5. More recent years have seen the last of the unknown territories – Australia and the interior of Africa – yield to the relentless assaults of modern exploration. These years have also seen the emissaries of the Church follow the newly blazed trails into the new lands. In all the vast reaches of the Pacific it would now be difficult to find an island remote enough to have escaped the vigilance and the energy of our missionaries. In speaking of all these achievements, however, we must not overlook a very significant fact about those who performed them. Very many of these, while working for the salvation of their brethren, themselves attained the heights of sanctity, just as the Apostles did before them. Many of them too, crowned their apostolate with the glory of martyrdom, entrenching the Faith at the cost of their blood.

6. Anyone who studies the facts of this great saga cannot help being profoundly impressed by them: by all the stupendous hardships our missionaries have undergone in extending the Faith, the magnificent devotion they have shown, and the overwhelming examples of intrepid endurance they have afforded us. And to anyone who weighs these facts the realization must come as a shock that right now, there still remain in the world immense multitudes of people who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death. According to a recent estimate, the number of non-believers in the world approximates one billion souls.

Purpose of this Letter

7. The misfortune of this vast number of souls is for Us a source of great sorrow. From the days when We first took up the responsibilities of this apostolic office We have yearned to share with them the divine blessings of the Redemption. So We are delighted to see that, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, efforts to promote and develop the foreign missions have in many quarters of the world increased and intensified. It is Our duty to foster these enterprises and do all We can to encourage them; and this duty coincides perfectly with Our own most profound desires. Before writing this letter, venerable Brethren, We begged the Lord for His light and His aid. While writing it, We had two purposes in mind: to encourage you, your clergy, and your people in these efforts, and secondly, to point out methods you can adopt to further the fulfilment of this momentous undertaking.

To Those In Charge of the Missions

8. First We want to address those who are in charge of the missions, whether as Bishops or as Vicars or Prefects Apostolic. All the responsibility for the propagation of the Faith rests immediately upon them, and it is to them especially that the Church has entrusted her prospects of expansion. We know very well the burning intensity of their zeal for the apostolate, and We are also well aware of the immense difficulties they have had to overcome and the crises they have had to face, especially in the last few years. This was the price they had to pay to remain at their stations and outposts and to go on extending the Kingdom of God. And so they paid it willingly.

Role of Superiors of Missions

9. Cognizant as We are, however, of their respect for this Apostolic See and their devotion to it, We do not hesitate to act as a father with his sons, and open Our mind to them. We want them to make this their guiding principle, that each of them must be, so to speak, the soul of the mission in his care. They should interest themselves deeply in the work of their priests, and in the work, too, of all others who assist them in the fulfilment of their duty. They should use every means they have – speech, action, writing – to encourage and stimulate these aides of theirs to ever higher achievements. Everyone who works in any capacity in the particular vineyard of the Lord over which He has authority should know by personal experience, and should know with complete

conviction, that the government of the mission is in the hands of a true father – an alert, efficient man, a man filled with charity, deeply interested in everyone and everything, a man who rejoices when things go well with his subjects and sympathizes when things go badly. They must see him favour and promote those of their projects and undertakings that merit his approval. To put it briefly, they must see that he looks on everything that concerns his subjects as something that concerns him personally.

The Superior and the Success of the Mission

10. It is indisputable that the condition and success of the missions depend on the way they are governed. They can suffer very severely if a man is put in charge of them who does not have the ability for the office or who is in some other way unsuitable for it. The individual missionary has given up his country and his family in order to aid in the extension of the Faith. When he sets out on his long and often dangerous journey he is, as a rule, eager and ready to brave the most gruelling hardships, and all he asks is an opportunity to win for Christ as many souls as possible. Now if a man like this encounters an attentive superior who always treats him with prudence and charity, his work cannot fail to be fruitful. But if the contrary occurs, then there is every reason to fear that the labours and hardships he meets will gradually wear him out, until he finally loses heart and gives himself over to idleness.

A Primary Concern

11. Furthermore, the superior of a mission should make it one of his primary concerns to expand and fully develop his mission. The entire region within the boundaries of his mission has been committed to his care. Consequently, he must work for the eternal salvation of every person living there. If, out of an immense populace, he has converted a few thousand people, he has no reason to lapse into complacency. He must become a guide and a protector for these children he has brought forth in Jesus Christ; he must see to their spiritual nourishment and he must not let a single one of them slip away and perish. But he must do more than this. He must not consider that he is properly discharging the duties of his office unless he is working constantly and with all the vigour he can muster to bring the other, far more numerous, inhabitants of the area to partake of the Christian truth and the Christian life.

An Effective Means

In this connection, the preaching of the Gospel can be brought more immediately and more effectively to everyone in an area if more mission stations and posts are established as soon as it is practicable to do so. Then, when the time comes to divide the mission, these will be ready to serve as centres for new Vicariates and Prefectures. While We are on this subject, We wish to single out for commendation some Vicars Apostolic who have richly earned it: those who have kept this future development steadily in mind and are constantly engaged in the work of readying

new provinces for the kingdom of God. If they find that their own order or congregation is not supplying enough manpower for the task, they are perfectly willing to call in helpers from other religious groups.

12. On the other hand, We can hardly commend a man who takes the section of the Lord's vineyard that has been allotted to him for cultivation, and proceeds to treat it as a piece of private property, a domain not to be touched by the hands of an outsider. Dwell for a moment upon the severity of God's judgement on a man like this, particularly if the case is like some that have been brought to Our attention at different times – a rather small community of the faithful surrounded by an immense population of unbelievers whom the superior cannot catechize because he does not have enough men for the work and refuses to accept the help of others. The man entrusted with a Catholic mission, if he is working single-mindedly for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, goes out whenever it is necessary and searches, searches everywhere, for helpers in his holy ministry. He does not mind who they are; he does not mind whether they belong to his order or to another, or whether or not they are of his nationality, "provided only that, in every way... Christ is being proclaimed" (*Phil 1:18*). Moreover, he does not limit his welcome to men, either. He will bring in sisters to open schools, orphanages, and hospitals, to found their hostels and establish other charitable institutions. He is happy and eager to do this, because he realizes how remarkably works of this kind, with God's help, contribute to the spread of the Faith.

13. In the pursuit of his objectives the conscientious mission head refuses, too, to limit his interests to the boundaries of his mission and to act as though he considered everything going on elsewhere as no concern of his. Fired with the charity of Christ, he feels that anything that affects Christ's glory affects him, and he does all he can to develop close and friendly relations with his colleagues in neighbouring districts. For situations frequently arise that affect all the missions in some particular area, and that demand joint action if they are to be handled successfully. But even apart from this, the Church would benefit a great deal if the men in charge of missions met at fixed intervals as frequently as they could to confer and to encourage one another.

Local Clergy

14. There is one final, and very important, point for anyone who has charge of a mission. He must make it his special concern to secure and train local candidates for the sacred ministry. In this policy lies the greatest hope of the new churches. For the local priest, one with his people by birth, by nature, by his sympathies and his aspirations, is remarkably effective in appealing to their mentality and thus attracting them to the Faith. Far better than anyone else, he knows the kind of argument they will listen to, and as a result, he often has easy access to places where a foreign priest would not be tolerated.

15. If, however, the indigenous clergy is to achieve the results We hope for, it is absolutely necessary that they be well trained and well prepared. We do not mean a rudimentary and

slipshod preparation, the bare minimum for ordination. No, their education should be complete and finished, excellent in all its phases, the same kind of education for the priesthood that a European would receive. For the local clergy is not to be trained merely to perform the humbler duties of the ministry, acting as the assistants of foreign priests. On the contrary, they must take up God's work as equals, so that some day they will be able to enter upon the spiritual leadership of their people.

Church not Alien

16. The Catholic Church is not an intruder in any country; nor is she alien to any people. It is only right, then, that those who exercise her sacred ministry should come from every nation, so that their countrymen can look to them for instruction in the law of God and leadership on the way to salvation. Wherever the local clergy exist in sufficient numbers, and are suitably trained and worthy of their holy vocation, there you can justly assume that the work of the missionary has been successful and that the Church has laid her foundations well. And if, after these foundations have been laid and these roots sunk, a persecution should be raised to dislodge her, there need be no reason to fear that she could not withstand the blow.

Concern for Training of Local Clergy

17. The Apostolic See has always urged the directors of missions to realize that this is a very serious obligation of their office and vigorously to put it into action. Here in Rome the colleges – both the old colleges and the newer ones – that train clergy for the foreign missions, have already shown their earnestness in the matter. This is particularly true of those training men for the Oriental rites. And yet it is a deplorable fact that, even after the Popes have insisted upon it, there still remain sections of the world that have heard the Faith preached for several centuries, and still have a local clergy that is of inferior quality. It is also true that there are countries that have been deeply penetrated by the light of the Faith, and have, besides, reached such a level of civilization that they produce eminent men in all the fields of secular life – and yet, though they have lived under the strengthening influence of the Church and the Gospel for hundreds of years, they still cannot produce Bishops for their spiritual government or priests for their spiritual guidance. From these facts it is obvious that in some places the system ordinarily used in training future missionaries has up to now been feeble and faulty. To correct this difficulty, We are ordering the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to apply remedies adapted to the various regions of the world, and to see to the founding of seminaries for both individual regions and groups of dioceses. Where seminaries already exist, this Congregation will see to it that they are adequately administered. However, the task to which the Congregation is to devote itself with particular care is the supervision of the growth and development of the local clergy in our Vicariates and other missions.

To the Missionaries

18. Now We turn to you, beloved sons, the workers in the Lord's vineyard. In your hands lies the immediate responsibility for disseminating the wisdom of Christ, and with this responsibility the salvation of innumerable souls. Our first admonition is this: never for a moment forget the lofty and splendid character of the task to which you have devoted yourselves. Your task is a divine one, a task far beyond the feeble reach of human reasoning. You have been called to carry light to men who lie in the shadow of death and to open the way to heaven for souls that are hurtling to destruction. Assure yourselves that God was speaking to you, to each one of you, when He said: "Forget your people and your father's house" (Ps 44:11). Remember that your duty is not the extension of a human realm, but of Christ's; and remember too that your goal is the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly fatherland, and not for an earthly one.

A Spiritual Goal

19. It would be tragic indeed if any of our missionaries forgot the dignity of their office so completely as to busy themselves with the interests of their terrestrial homeland instead of with those of their homeland in heaven. It would be a tragedy indeed if an apostolic man were to spend himself in attempts to increase and exalt the prestige of the native land he once left behind him. Such behaviour would infect his apostolate like a plague. It would destroy in him, the representative of the Gospel, the sinews of his love for souls and it would destroy his reputation with the populace. For no matter how wild and barbarous a people may be, they are well aware of what the missionary is doing in their country and of what he wants for them. They will subject him in their own way to a very searching investigation, and if he has any object in view other than their spiritual good, they will find out about it. Suppose it becomes clear that he is involved in worldly schemes of some kind, and that, instead of devoting himself exclusively to the work of the apostolate, he is serving the interests of his homeland as well. The people immediately suspect everything he does. And in addition, such a situation could easily give rise to the conviction that the Christian religion is the national religion of some foreign people and that anyone converted to it is abandoning his loyalty to his own people and submitting to the pretensions and domination of a foreign power.

20. We have been deeply saddened by some recent accounts of missionary life, accounts that displayed more zeal for the profit of some particular nation than for the growth of the kingdom of God. We have been astonished at the indifference of their authors to the amount of hostility these works stir up in the minds of unbelievers. This is not the way of the Catholic missionary, not if he is worthy of the name. No, the true missionary is always aware that he is not working as an agent of his country, but as an ambassador of Christ. And his conduct is such that it is perfectly obvious to anyone watching him that he represents a Faith that is alien to no nation on earth, since it embraces all who worship God in spirit and in truth, a Faith in which "there is no Gentile, no Jew, no circumcised, no uncircumcised, no barbarian, no Scythian, no slave, no free man, but Christ is everything in each of us" (Col 3:11).

Selfless Work

21. There is another failing that the missionary must scrupulously avoid, and that is the desire to make any profit beyond the acquisition of souls. There is, of course, no need to delay on this point. If a man is the victim of a craving for financial gain, how can he fulfil his obligations of working single-mindedly for the glory of God? And how can he, for the increase of God's glory, hold himself ready to sacrifice everything he has, even his life, to the work of calling others back to a state of spiritual health? There is also the fact that this weakness would cost him a great part of his influence with unbelievers – a fact especially cogent if his craving should descend, as it tends to do, to the level of avarice. For as men judge things, this is the meanest of vices. Nothing is more unworthy of the kingdom of God. In this matter then, the truly apostolic man will again follow the advice of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who in a well-known passage wrote to Timothy: "Let us be content if we have food and clothing" (*1 Tim 6:8*). He will remember too, that Saint Paul set such great store by self-denial that, despite the demands of his arduous ministry, he used to provide for his own needs by manual labour.

Training

22. Before he enters upon his apostolate the missionary should have very careful training. This is true despite the possible objection that a man destined to preach Christ in places far removed from civilization has no need of a broad education. It is beyond dispute, of course, that for the work of converting the minds of men the refinements of virtue are more valuable than a knowledge of the fine points of literature. If, however, a man has not been supplied with a creditable provision of learning, it is going to be brought home to him quite frequently that he lacks what could have been an important asset in the fruitful fulfilment of his ministry. It is not a rare occurrence for a missionary to find himself without books and with no opportunity to consult someone more learned than himself. Yet he has to reply to any arguments against the Faith that are brought to him and he is often required to provide answers to very difficult questions. The more learned he proves himself in circumstances like these the greater will be his reputation and his authority, especially if he is dealing with people who hold scholarship and learning in high regard. In such a situation it would be a shocking anomaly to see those entrusted with the message of truth bested by teachers of error.

Proficiency in all Branches of Learning

23. Because of these demands of the apostolate, the students whom the Lord has called to sacred studies must acquire proficiency in all the branches of learning while they are being trained for their future work. These branches will include both sacred and profane subjects, anything they might need on the missions. We want this procedure adopted, as is proper, in the courses given at the Urbanianum, the Pontifical College of the Propagation of the Faith. We also enjoin the directors of this College to make adequate provision for the teaching of the science of missiology,

a branch of study that from now on is to be included in their curriculum.

Knowledge of Language

24. Among the attainments necessary for the life of a missionary, a place of paramount importance must obviously be granted to the language of the people to whose salvation he will devote himself. He should not be content with a smattering of the language, but should be able to speak it readily and competently. For in this respect he is under an obligation to all those he deals with, the learned and the ignorant alike, and he will soon realize the advantage a command of their language gives him in the task of winning the confidence of the populace. If he is earnest about his work, he will be particularly reluctant to delegate the explanation of Christian doctrine to his catechists. He will insist upon reserving this duty to himself. Since he has been sent to the missions for no other purpose, after all, than to preach the Gospel, he will even come to look on these instruction periods as the most important part of his work. There will also be occasions when, in his position as representative and interpreter of our holy Faith, he will have to associate with the dignitaries of the district. Or he may be invited to appear at scholarly gatherings. How will he maintain his dignity under these circumstances if he cannot make himself understood because he does not know the language?

25. We made some provision for this need a short time ago when We were planning for the increase and expansion of the Church in the East. We established here in Rome a special house of studies for those who are destined for the apostolate in that part of the world. There they will acquire fluency in Eastern languages and an intimate acquaintance with Eastern ways, along with a thorough mastery of various other skills that will be of use to them. Our enthusiasm for the advantages afforded by the work of this institute prompts Us to take this opportunity to urge the superiors of all religious orders doing mission work in the East to take advantage of this training and use it to bring to full maturity the abilities of those of their students who have been chosen for these missions.

Necessity of Sanctity

26. But for the man who enters upon the apostolic life there is one attribute that is indispensable. It is of the most critical importance, as We have mentioned before, that he have sanctity of life. For the man who preaches God must himself be a man of God. The man who urges others to despise sin must despise it himself. Preaching by example is a far more effective procedure than vocal preaching, especially among unbelievers, who tend to be more impressed by what they see for themselves than by any arguments that can be presented to them. Give the missionary, if you will, every imaginable talent of mind and intellect, endow him with the most extensive learning and the most brilliant culture. Unless these qualities are accompanied by moral integrity they will be of little or no value in the apostolate. On the contrary, they can be the cause of disaster, both to himself and to others.

27. Let us have him, then, be an example to those he deals with. Let him be humble and obedient and chaste. And especially let him be a devout man, dedicated to prayer and constant union with God, a man who goes before the Divine Majesty and fervently pleads the cause of souls. For as he binds himself more and more closely to God, he will receive the grace and assistance of God to a greater and greater degree. Particularly applicable here are the words of Saint Paul: "Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and well beloved, clothe yourselves with sentiments of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience" (*Col 3:12*). With these virtues the missionary will open for the Faith he preaches a smooth and unobstructed entrance into people's hearts. All obstacles will melt from his path, for no man's will is obdurate enough to oppose their attraction with equanimity.

The Missionary's Model

28. Like his model, the Lord Jesus, the good missionary burns with charity, and he numbers even the most abandoned unbelievers among God's children, redeemed like everyone else with the ransom of the divine blood. Their lowly difference does not exasperate him; their immorality does not dishearten him. His bearing toward them is neither scornful nor fastidious; his treatment of them is neither harsh nor rough. Instead, he makes use of all the arts of Christian kindness to attract them to himself, so that he may eventually lead them into the arms of Christ, into the embrace of the Good Shepherd. He makes it a custom to ponder the thought expressed in Holy Scripture: "Thy kindly influence, Lord, Thy gracious influence is all about us. At the first false step, none is so ready to rebuke us, to remind and warn us of our error, bidding us come back and renew our loyalty to Thee... With such power at Thy disposal, a lenient judge Thou provest thyself, riding us with a light rein, and keeping Thy terrors in reserve" (*Wis 12:1-2.18*). What obstacle can arise, what annoyance or danger exists that could deter this emissary of Jesus Christ from fulfilling the task he has begun? There is none. This man, who has attained great favour with God by his free choice of the lofty work he has taken upon himself, will cheerfully endure whatever adversity or hardship befalls him. Toil, scorn, want, hunger, even a dreadful death – he will gladly accept them all, as long as there remains a slight chance that he can free even one soul from the jaws of hell.

29. The missionary who is motivated and inspired by the example of Christ Our Lord and of the Apostles can go out confidently to his ministry. But he must recognize that the basis of his confidence rests entirely on God. As We have said before, this whole work is a divine work. Only God can enter men's hearts and illumine their minds with the radiance of truth; only God can enkindle their wills with the spark of virtue; only God can give them the strength to pursue the truth and do the good they have seen. The emissary will spend himself in vain unless his Lord helps him as he works. Yet he has every reason to go bravely on with the task allotted to him, for he can rely on divine grace which is never withheld from the one who asks for it.

Praise of Religious Sisters

30. We must not go further without saying something about the work that is being done by women, for since the very earliest days of the Church they have always been remarkable for their diligence and zeal in assisting the preachers of the Gospel. We want to single out here, and single out for Our highest praise, those many women who have vowed their virginity to God and have gone to pursue their vocation on the missions. There they have devoted themselves to the education of children and to a great many other works of charity and devotion. This recognition of their achievements will, We hope, encourage and inspire them to further efforts on behalf of the Church. We hope too that they will hold fast to the conviction that the usefulness of their work will increase in proportion to the care they give to their own spiritual perfection.

To All Catholics

31. And now We would like to address all those who, thanks to the mercy of God, possess the true Faith and participate in the innumerable benefits that flow from it. First We should like to point out the fact that the sacred obligation of assisting in the conversion of unbelievers applies also to them. For “God gave commandment to each of them concerning his neighbour” (*Sir 17:14*); and the strictness of this command varies in proportion to the seriousness of the neighbour’s need. Now what class of people is more in need of fraternal help than unbelievers, who live in ignorance of God, and consequently, bound by the chains of their blind and violent desires, are enslaved in the most hideous of all the forms of slavery, the service of Satan? Anyone then who contributes whatever services he can to the work of bringing the light of faith to them – and helping the work of the missions is the best means – would accomplish two purposes at the same time. He would be fulfilling his obligation in this important matter, and he would also be thanking God in a particularly appropriate way for the faith that has been given to him.

Three Ways to Help

32. There are three general ways in which a Catholic can assist the missionary effort, and missionaries themselves constantly remind us of them. The first is within everyone’s capacity. This first means is prayer, prayer that God may grant the missions His merciful aid. We have already insisted that the toil of our missionaries would be futile and barren unless divine grace rendered it vital and fruitful. Saint Paul referred to this fact when he said, “It was I who planted the seed; it is Apollo who waters it; but it is God Who makes it grow” (*1 Cor 3:6*). We must remember, however, that we have a way of obtaining this grace – the way of humble and persevering prayer. As Our Lord said, “regarding anything they ask for, their prayer shall be granted by My Father in heaven” (*Mt 18:19*). This kind of prayer cannot fail, especially in this cause. For no cause is dearer or more pleasing to God than this one. While the Israelites fought their battle with Amalek, Moses took his stand on a great hill and, lifting up his hands, implored God’s aid for his people. The teachers of the Gospel are manfully at work in the Lord’s vineyard, and it is the duty of all the faithful to follow the example of Moses and grant them the support of their prayers.

Role of the Apostleship of Prayer

33. It was to carry out this duty properly that the organization called the Apostleship of Prayer was established, and We take this occasion to recommend it warmly to all devout Christians. It is our hope that none of them will neglect to join this organization. We pray that they will all want to participate in the mission effort, and if they cannot assist in the field, they will, nevertheless, be willing to contribute their zeal and their devotion.

Fostering Vocations

34. Secondly, something must be done about the scarcity of missionaries. Their number was small enough a few years ago; but now, since the war, it has been so reduced that many areas of the Lord's vineyard are without labourers. We appeal to you, venerable Brethren, for a particularly vigorous approach to this problem. You will be performing a service eminently worthy of your love of the Faith if you take pains to foster any signs of a missionary vocation that appear among your priests and seminarians. Do not be deceived by the claims of a false prudence; do not let human reasoning deter you with the plea that what you send to the foreign missions you will be subtracting from the resources of your diocese. To fill the place of each priest you send to the missions, God will give you many priests, and very able priests, for your work at home.

35. To the superiors of religious orders and institutes that serve the missions We address a most earnest request that they choose for this critical work only the best of their men, those who are outstanding in virtue, in devotion, in zeal for souls. And whenever it becomes evident that their missionaries have succeeded in converting a particular people from superstition to the divine wisdom of Christianity, and that the Church has been securely established there, then it is time for superiors to send their men on, so that these selected troops of Christ can wrest still another people from the clutches of the devil. What they have won they won for Christ. Do not balk now at leaving the harvest to be reaped by others. And remember that this type of procedure, this continual preparation of harvests, will bring down upon your congregations the richest gifts of God's divine goodness.

Economic Help

36. Finally, the missions need economic help, and a substantial amount of it. The war has enormously increased their difficulties. It has wiped out a great number of schools, hospitals and hostels, has destroyed organized charities and put an end to many other types of foundation they once operated. In this crisis We appeal to all good Christians for whatever liberality they can afford. "How can the love of God abide in him who possesses worldly goods, and, seeing his brother in need, closes his heart to him?" (1 Jn 3:17). When he said this, the Apostle John was referring to people who suffer physical need. But does not the law of charity bind even more strictly when there is even more at stake than the rescue of enormous numbers of people from

hunger and destitution and the other forms of physical suffering? Does not this law bind us more stringently when the issue is also, and primarily, the rescue of this stupendous multitude of souls from the arrogant domination of Satan, and their entrance into the freedom of the children of God?

Society for the Propagation of the Faith

37. We warmly urge Catholics to give generous assistance to the organizations that have been established for the support of the missions. The first of these is the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, an organization that has repeatedly earned the commendation of Our predecessors. In the hope that its work will be even more fruitful in the future, We recommend it to the particular attention of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. For this organization has to supply a goodly proportion of the funds needed for the missions, both the missions already established and those that will be organized in the future. We are confident that in times like these when spokesmen for erroneous doctrines are numerous and affluent, the Catholic world will not permit its own missionaries, the sowers of the seeds of truth, to go without resources.

Association of the Holy Childhood

38. A second organization that We strongly recommend to the charity of all Catholics is the Association of the Holy Childhood, a group that arranges for the administration of Baptism to dying children of non-Christian families. This organization is particularly commendable because of the fact that our Catholic children can take part in it and in this way learn to appreciate the value of the faith that has been given to them. If they learn this, they will also learn to associate themselves with the work of sharing this gift with others. Still another organization We wish to mention is the Society of Saint Peter the Apostle, an organization that aids in the education and training of local clergy for the missions.

39. Our predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, prescribed a means of assisting these various organizations, and it is Our will that this prescription be faithfully observed. We are speaking of the custom of taking up in all churches on the Feast of the Epiphany, a collection “for the ransom of captives from Africa”, and sending the proceeds to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

Missionary Union of the Clergy

40. But if these hopes of Ours, venerable Brethren, are to be assured of very great success, you must adopt some special measure to direct the thoughts of your clergy toward the missions. The faithful are generally ready and willing to come to the assistance of this willingness so that the missions will gain as much as possible by it. To accomplish this end, We desire the establishment, in all the dioceses of the Catholic world, of the organization called the Missionary Union of the Clergy. This organization is under the direction of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of

the Faith, and We have given the Congregation all the authorization necessary for its work. The Union was organized a short time ago in Italy, and has rapidly taken root in other places. Its work has Our complete approval, and We have already demonstrated Our pontifical approbation by granting it a number of privileges. With good reason, for the Union's methods are admirably suited to the task of fostering among the clergy the readiness and ability to instil in Christian hearts a concern for the salvation of the non-Catholic multitudes and to promote the various enterprises that the Holy See has approved as effective channels for assistance to the missions.

Conclusion

41. We have now said, venerable Brethren, what We wanted to say to you about the work of propagating the Catholic Faith through the world. If all Catholics, both the missionaries in the field and the faithful at home, meet the obligations of this task as they should, then We have good reason to hope that our missions will quickly recover from the severe wounds and losses inflicted by the war, and that they will in a short time again show their old strength and vigour. As We look into the future, We seem to hear the Lord's voice, urging Us to "Launch out into the deep water" (Lk 5:4), as He urged Peter long ago. Our paternal charity spurs Us to the work of leading into His welcoming arms the multitudes now living with us in this world. For the Church is sustained by the Spirit of God, and under the influence of this Spirit she remains always strong and vigorous. Then too, the work of the thousands of apostolic men who have laboured in the past and are labouring now to promote her growth cannot fail to have its effect. And their example will attract numerous others to imitate them, and to go out, supported by the generosity and devotion of the good Christian people, to reap for Christ a rich harvest of souls.

42. May the great Mother of God, the Queen of Apostles, hear our united prayers and call down upon the heralds of the Gospel the graces of the Holy Spirit. As a token of these graces, venerable Brethren, and as a proof of Our cordial good will, We very affectionately impart to you, and to the clergy and people in your charge, Our apostolic benediction.

Given in Rome at Saint Peter's, on 30 November 1919, the sixth year of Our Pontificate.

Benedict XV