



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 18 August 2010

Saint Pius the Tenth

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today I would like to reflect on my Predecessor, St Pius X whose liturgical Memorial we shall be celebrating next Saturday and to underline certain features that may be useful to both Pastors and faithful also in our time.

Giuseppe Sarto, that was his name, was born into a peasant family in Riese, Treviso, in 1835. After studying at the Seminary in Padua he was ordained a priest when he was 23 years old. He was first curate in Tombolo, then parish priest at Salzano and then canon of the Cathedral of Treviso with the offices of episcopal chancellor and spiritual director of the Diocesan Seminary. In these years of rich and generous pastoral experience, the future Pontiff showed that deep love for Christ and for the Church, that humility and simplicity and great charity to the needy which characterized his entire life. In 1884 he was appointed Bishop of Mantua, and in 1893, Patriarch of Venice. On 4 August 1903, he was elected Pope, a ministry he hesitated to accept since he did not consider himself worthy of such a lofty office.

Pius X's Pontificate left an indelible mark on the Church's history and was distinguished by a considerable effort for reform that is summed up in his motto: *Instaurare Omnia in Christo*, "To renew all things in Christ". Indeed, his interventions involved various ecclesiastical contexts. From the outset he devoted himself to reorganizing the Roman Curia; he then began work on the Code of Canon Law which was promulgated by his Successor Benedict XV. He later promoted the

revision of the studies and formation programme of future priests and founded various Regional Seminaries, equipped with good libraries and well-qualified teachers. Another important sector was that of the doctrinal formation of the People of God. Beginning in his years as parish priest, he himself had compiled a catechism and during his Episcopate in Mantua he worked to produce a single, if not universal catechism, at least in Italian. As an authentic Pastor he had understood that the situation in that period, due partly to the phenomenon of emigration, made necessary a catechism to which every member of the faithful might refer, independently of the place in which he lived and of his position. As Pontiff, he compiled a text of Christian doctrine for the Diocese of Rome that was later disseminated throughout Italy and the world. Because of its simple, clear, precise language and effective explanations, this "Pius X Catechism", as it was called, was a reliable guide to many in learning the truths of the faith.

Pius X paid considerable attention to the reform of the Liturgy and, in particular, of sacred music in order to lead the faithful to a life of more profound prayer and fuller participation in the Sacraments. In the *Motu Proprio Tra le Sollecitudini* (1903), the first year of his Pontificate, he said that the true Christian spirit has its first and indispensable source in active participation in the sacrosanct mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church (cf. *AAS* 36[1903], 531). For this reason he recommended that the Sacraments be received often, encouraging the daily reception of Holy Communion and appropriately lowering the age when children receive their First Communion "to about seven", the age "when a child begins to reason" (cf. *S. Congr. de Sacramentis, Decretum Quam Singulari: AAS* 2 [1910] 582).

Faithful to the task of strengthening his brethren in the faith, in confronting certain trends that were manifest in the theological context at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Pius X intervened decisively, condemning "Modernism" to protect the faithful from erroneous concepts and to foster a scientific examination of the Revelation consonant with the Tradition of the Church. On 7 May 1909, with his Apostolic Letter *Vinea Electa*, he founded the Pontifical Biblical Institute. The last months of his life were overshadowed by the impending war. His appeal to Catholics of the world, launched on 2 August 1914 to express the bitter pain of the present hour, was the anguished plea of a father who sees his children taking sides against each other. He died shortly afterwards, on 20 August, and the fame of his holiness immediately began to spread among the Christian people.

Dear brothers and sisters, St Pius X teaches all of us that at the root of our apostolic action in the various fields in which we work there must always be close personal union with Christ, to cultivate and to develop, day after day. This is the essence of all his teaching, of all his pastoral commitment. Only if we are in love with the Lord shall we be able to bring people to God and open them to his merciful love and thereby open the world to God's mercy.

My dear brothers and sisters, today we recall Pope St Pius X, whose feast we celebrate this coming Saturday. He left an indelible mark in very many aspects of the Church's life and activity, his overarching goal being to "renew all things in Christ" through our intimate personal union with our Saviour. By Pope St Pius' prayers, may we grow daily in love for Christ and help open others to his love. God's abundant Blessings upon you all!

Lastly, I address the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*. I ask all of you to devote ever more time to Christian formation in order to be faithful disciples of Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

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Appeal for flood victims in Pakistan

My thoughts go at this time to the beloved peoples of Pakistan, recently afflicted by a serious flood that has taken a heavy toll of life and left many families homeless.

As I entrust to God's merciful goodness all those who have been tragically lost, I express my spiritual closeness to their relatives and to everyone who is suffering because of this disaster. May these brothers and sisters of ours, so harshly tried, not lack our solidarity and the practical support of the International Community!

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