



The Holy See

VI È BEN NOTO

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE ROSARY AND PUBLIC LIFE*

To the Bishops of Italy.

Venerable Brethren,

You know how We place amid present dangers Our confidence in the Glorious Virgin of the Holy Rosary, for the safety and prosperity of Christendom and the peace and tranquillity of the Church. Mindful that in moments of great trial, pastors and people have ever had recourse with entire confidence to the august Mother of God, in whose hands are all graces, certain too, that devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary is most opportune for the needs of these times, We have desired to revive everywhere this devotion, and to spread it far and wide among the faithful of the world. Often times already We, in recommending the pious practice of devoting October to honouring Our Lady, have pointed out Our reasons and hope for so doing, and the forms to be observed; and the entire Church, docile to Our desires, has ever replied by special manifestations of devotion; and now is making ready to pay to Mary, during a whole month, a daily tribute of the devotion so dear to it. In such pious rivalry Italy has not been behind-hand, for devotion to Our Lady is deeply and widely rooted in this land; and We doubt not that this year too, Italy will set a glorious example of love for the august Mother of God, and will give Us fresh reasons for consolation and hope. Nevertheless We cannot do less than address to you, Venerable Brethren, a few words of exhortation, so that with particular and renewed zeal the month dedicated to the Most Holy Virgin of the Rosary may be sanctified in every diocese of Italy.

2. It is easy to imagine what reasons We have for doing this. Since God called Us to govern His Church on earth, We have sought to use every possible means that We deemed suitable, for the sanctification of souls and the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ. We have excepted from Our daily solicitude no nation and no people, mindful that Our Redeemer shed His precious blood on the Cross and opened the reign of grace and of glory for all. None, however, can be surprised that

We showed special care for the Italian people, for Our Divine Master Jesus Christ chose, from out all the world, Italy to be the seat of His Vicar on earth, and in His providential designs appointed Rome to be the capital of the Catholic world. On this account the Italian people is called upon to live close to the Father of the whole Christian family, and to share in a special way in his sorrows and his glory. Unfortunately We find in Italy much to sadden Our souls. Faith and Christian morals, the precious inheritance bequeathed by Our ancestors, and in all past times the glory of Our country and of Italy's great ones, are being attacked artfully and in covert ways, or even openly, with cynicism that is revolting, by a handful of men who seek to rob others of that faith and morality they have themselves lost. In this more especially is seen the work of the sects, and of those who are more or less their willing tools. Above all, in this city of Rome, where Christ's Vicar has his See are their efforts concentrated and their diabolical designs displayed with ferocious obstinacy.

3. We need not tell you, Venerable Brethren, with what bitterness Our soul is filled at seeing the danger there is for the salvation of so many of Our beloved children. And Our sorrow is greater because We find it impossible to oppose such great evil with that salutary efficacy We would desire and that We have the right to use, for you know, Venerable Brethren, and all the world knows, the state to which we are reduced. On this account We feel a still greater desire to call upon the Mother of God and to ask her help. Let all good Italians pray for their misguided brethren, for their common Father the Roman Pontiff, that God, in His infinite mercy, may hear and answer the prayers of a father and his sons. And Our most lively and sure hope is placed in the Queen of the Rosary, who has shown herself, since she has been invoked by that title, so ready to help the Church and Christian peoples in their necessities. Already have We recorded these glories and the great triumphs won over the Albigenses and other powerful enemies, glories and triumphs which have not only profited the Church, afflicted and persecuted, but also the temporal welfare of peoples and nations. Why in this hour of need should We not behold again such marvels of the power and goodness of the august Virgin, for the good of the Church and its Head, and of the whole Christian world, if the faithful only revive, on their part, the magnificent examples of piety given by their fore fathers, under similar circumstances? And to make this most powerful Queen more and more propitious, We would honour her more and more in the invocation of the Rosary, and increase this devotion. And to this end We have made a double of the second class for all the Church of the Feast of the Rosary. And for the same purpose We ardently desire the Catholics of Italy, with lively faith, especially during this month of October, to invoke this august Virgin and to do loving violence to her mother's heart, and to pray to her for the triumph of the Church and the Apostolic See, for the liberty of the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and for peace and public prosperity. And since the effects of such prayers will be proportionate to the dispositions of those offering them, We ardently exhort you, venerable brethren, to devote all your care and zeal to kindle among those committed to your charge a strong, living, and active faith, and to call on all to return by penance to grace and to the faithful fulfilment of all their duties. Among such duties, considering the state of the times, must be reckoned as paramount an open and sincere profession of the faith and teaching of Jesus Christ, casting aside all human respect, and considering before all things the interest of religion and the salvation of souls. It cannot be

concealed that, although thanks to the mercy of God religious feeling is strong and widely spread among Italians, nevertheless by the evil influence of men and the times religious indifference is on the increase, and hence there is a lessening of that respect and filial love for the Church which was the glory of our ancestors and in which they placed their highest ambition. Let it be your work, venerable brethren, to revive this Christian feeling among your people, an interest in the Catholic cause, a confidence in Our Lady's help, and a spirit of prayer. It is certain that the august Queen, invoked thus well by her many sons, would deign to hear their prayer, console Us in Our sorrow, and crown Our efforts for the Church and for Italy, by granting better times to both. With these desires, We bestow on you, venerable brethren, and the clergy and people committed to your care, the Apostolic Benediction as a promise of graces and favours of the highest kind from heaven.

Given at the Vatican this 20th day of September 1887.

LEO XIII