



The Holy See

NON MEDIOCRI

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE SPANISH COLLEGE IN ROME

*To the Bishops of Spain Concerning
the Foundation of a Roman College for Spanish Clerics.*

With no little care and vigilance, as you know, We have endeavored to safeguard and augment the Catholic cause among you from the very beginning of Our term of office. In the first place We strove to strengthen concord of minds among you and to stimulate the fruitful industry of the clergy. Now, however, animated by the same zeal, We have turned our attention to your young clergy so that, taking counsel with you, We may devote some care to their formation. - To this end, We pledge Our paternal benevolence. And justly so: We are not forgetful of the interests of the Spanish people, nor ignorant of your great and constant faith of old and your obedience to the Apostolic See. This was why, as historical documents testify, the reputation of Spain rose to such glory and why Spain became so great an empire. Spain has often helped us in adversity; We are, therefore, greatly pleased to respond in like affection of spirit.

Noteworthy Spaniards

2. The Spanish clergy was long renowned for their religious learning and the elegance of their writings. By these arts, they promoted the Christian cause and contributed not a little to the reputation of their country. Certainly there was no lack of generous men who patronized the arts and offered aid appropriate to the times. Nor was there a lack of talent for the cultivation of theological and philosophical disciplines and for letters. To promote these studies We know how much the liberality of the Catholic kings and the labor and perseverance of the bishops contributed. In its turn the Apostolic See provided every kind of incentive, for it always strove that the sanctity of Christian morals, might be augmented by the light of philosophy and the splendor of humane letters. A number of extraordinary men have left you a glorious heritage in these areas. We mention Francis Suarez, John Lugo, Francis Toletus, and particularly Francis Ximenes. The latter, by the leadership and under the protection of the Roman Pontiffs, attained such eminence in learning that he illumined not only Spain, but all of Europe, especially by his Complutensian Polyglot Bible. By these men youths were taught by the splendor of wisdom in the Church of God. They shone Like morning stars and illumined others in the way of truth.(1) From that harvest, so wisely and zealously cultivated, a cohort of illustrious learned men arose, from which the Roman

Pontiff and the Catholic King chose men for the Council of Trent. The expectations of both were singularly satisfied. Nor is it remarkable that Spain produced such great men. For in addition to natural talent, the appropriate aids and instruments by which a course of studies is perfected were at hand. It is sufficient to recall the great seats of learning Alcala de Henares and Salamanca. Under the vigilance of the Church, they were renowned centers of Christian wisdom. Their memory spontaneously recalls other colleges which have offered an appropriate home for men outstanding in talent and passion for knowledge.

Uprooting of Seminaries

3. But now We are faced with a recent disaster. The upheavals of public events which disturbed all of Europe beginning in the previous century have overturned institutions as by a storm and torn them apart root and branch; both the royal and the ecclesiastical authorities had provided these institutions for the growth of faith and doctrine. When the Catholic Universities disappeared with their colleges, the seminaries for clerics languished because the fullness of learning, which had come from the great schools, gradually withered away. Moreover, they could not maintain their former estate because of internal wars and the mobs, which from time to time brought to nought the studies and intellectual strength of the citizens.

Restoration of Seminaries

4. In time the Apostolic See intervened and earnestly sought, with the consent of the civil power, to remedy ecclesiastical affairs which the preceding storms had crippled. The chief concern was to restore, in the private and public interest, the diocesan seminaries, which had been homes of piety and erudition. But you know that it did not succeed according to plan. For sufficient resources were not at hand; nor could the course of studies rise again with the hope of glory because the destruction of the Lycea had caused a dearth of suitable teachers. - It was agreed between the two highest authorities that in some provinces general seminaries be founded with the power that from their graduates those who had studied theology more fully could be admitted to academic degrees after the old manner. But there were and are today many obstacles to this. With the help of the former Lycea removed, many resources are lacking; without these the clergy can aspire only with difficulty to the full and perfect praise of erudition. So there is only one opinion among the prudent, that it is necessary to enlarge and to reform the course of studies in the seminaries.

Educating Foreign Students

5. Thus We are quite concerned about this, especially in light of the pattern left Us by Our predecessors, who never omitted an opportunity to encourage higher studies. The remarkable forethought of the Pontiffs shines out particularly in the fact that, to this very city, the first of all Catholic communities, they summoned young clerics from abroad and gathered them into colleges. They especially sought students whose countries lacked adequate opportunities for learning or sound institutions, after the vigilance of the Church had been rejected. For this end many minor seminaries were established to which foreign students flocked to take up sacred studies; they intended to use whatever blessings of mind and spirit they might acquire in Rome for the ultimate benefit of their own countrymen. Since much good has resulted from these efforts, We too considered it worthwhile to increase the number of such colleges. Therefore We opened the college for the Armenians in Rome and one for the Bohemians. We also restored to its onetime dignity the college for the

Maronites.

Seminaries for Spaniards

6. We were grieved to find that not many Spaniards were in this gathering of foreign students. For this reason We made plans not only that the urban college for Spanish clerics, which the wise labors of pious priests had begun not long ago, be established on a firm foundation, but that expansion would be possible. It is Our pleasure, therefore, that all students from the Spanish peninsula and from the neighboring islands under the rule of the Catholic king be assembled in it under our guardianship. They are to live together under the direction of chosen authorities and devote themselves to the study of those subjects which effectively develop their talents and their minds. We contemplate donating a building in Rome suitable for this work, a building named from its former owners, The Dukes of Altemps. It now belongs to Us and the Apostolic See. It is particularly appropriate since it is distinguished by the cemetery of St. Anicetus, Pope and Martyr, whose relics are kept there. It is also noted for the fact that St. Charles Borromeo once lived there. We therefore give the legal use of this dwelling to the Spanish college of bishops, with the condition that they use it to receive and house clerics of their dioceses, should they decide to send some here for their studies. In order that these plans may more quickly be carried out, and that there may be sufficient time to adapt the buildings and make the other preparations, let the clerics use a certain suitable portion of the house of the illustrious family Alteria. We designate the Archbishops of Toledo and Seville to deal with Us and Our successors concerning all more important matters of the college. For the same reason We decree that he who presides over the college must give a written account each year of its financial status, together with a report concerning the discipline and conduct of the students, to Our Sacred Council of Studies, as well as to the archbishops mentioned above. They in turn will notify their colleagues, the Bishops of Spain. - It is now your part to assist and execute what We have begun. Do this as quickly and zealously as the matter demands and your episcopal virtue promises. - Meanwhile We grant with love Our Apostolic Benediction as a testimony of Our special benevolence to you, Venerable Brethren, and also to the clergy and faithful entrusted to your vigilance.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's Oct. 25, 1893, in the sixteenth year of Our Pontificate.

LEO XIII

REFERENCES:

1. Alexander VI in the bull *Inter cetera*, April 13, 1499.

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