

THE THIRD ORDER

Of the Society of St. Pius X



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Dear Postulants and Professed members,

Today is the feast of our patron, St. Pius X, so I would like to call to mind some moments from his life and some of his ideas so that we may have an example to imitate.

When Pope Leo XIII had died, Cardinal Sarto of Venice was summoned to Rome for the election of a new Pope, he was so sure that he would not be elected and was so little known that when a French cardinal met him and spoke to him in French: "Your Eminence must be Italian, for I don't know you. Which diocese are you from?" Cardinal Sarto replied in Latin: "I do not speak French. I am the archbishop of Venice." "You do not speak French? What a pity! That means you haven't a chance of being elected, for a Pope must be able to speak French." Cardinal Sarto replied delightedly, "Really? Then I am not eligible? Thank God!" But soon it was clear that he was the choice of the other cardinals.

After the ballots were counted, it was announced that fifty electors had voted for Cardinal Sarto. This was more than the required two-thirds needed, he had been elected. Pale and in tears, the cardinal sat in his place as the other cardinals rose respectfully and advanced to his throne. "Do you accept our choice?" the cardinal deacon asked. A long silence followed. Finally, Cardinal Sarto said: "May the will of God be done." The answer was not clear, so the question was put to Cardinal Sarto a second time. And this time the man who had been chosen gave the answer that the cardinals longed to hear: "I will accept the papacy, but as a cross. And you, my fathers, must help me to carry it." Cardinal Sarto was asked what name he would choose the new pope replied: "As I shall suffer, I shall take the name of those popes who also suffered. My papal name will be Pius."

St. Pius X's first encyclical, dated October 4, 1903, is entitled *E Supremi Apostolatus*. The Pope had been crowned August 4th; hence it is just two months after his accession to the throne that he published this relatively short and clearly developed encyclical. Just after the prologue, he exposes the program he intends to follow during the course of his pontificate, while at the same time sketching his vision of the state of the world. He encourages the bishops to give their support, insisting especially on the formation of seminarians, the care of the clergy, and Catholic action.

"In truth reasons both numerous and most weighty were not lacking to justify this resistance of Ours...Then again, to omit other motives, We were terrified beyond all else by the disastrous state of human society today. For who can fail to see that society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep-rooted malady which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is dragging it to destruction? You understanding, Venerable Brethren, what this disease is – apostasy from God..."

The Pope then proscribes a remedy which will be the whole program of his pontificate: "We proclaim that We have no other program in the Supreme Pontificate but that "of restoring all things in Christ", so that "Christ may be all in all."

He then describes the sickness in detail: "For in truth, "the nations have raged and the peoples imagined vain things" (Ps.2:1) against their Creator, so frequent is the cry of the enemies of God: "depart from us" (Job. 21:14). And as might be expected we find extinguished among the

majority of men all respect for the Eternal God, and no regard paid in the manifestations of public and private life to the supreme will."

And what is the reason for this? *"...although man cannot utterly extinguish in himself all knowledge of God, he has contemned God's majesty and , as it were, made of the universe a temple wherein he himself is to be adored."*

The Pope sees only one remedy: the order willed by God. *"You see, then, Venerable Brethren, the duty that has been imposed alike upon Us and upon you of bringing back to the discipline of the Church human society, now estranged from the wisdom of Christ; the Church will then subject it to Christ, and Christ to God."*

And this is the order in society willed by God: *"...it remains to restore to their ancient place of honour the most holy laws and counsels of the gospel; to proclaim aloud the truths taught by the Church, and her teachings of the sanctity of marriage, on the education and discipline of youth, on the possession and use of property, the duties that men owe to those who rule the state; and lastly to restore equilibrium between the different classes of society according to Christian precept and custom. This is what We, in submitting Ourselves to the manifestations of the Divine will, purpose to aim at during Our Pontificate, and We will use all our industry to attain it."*

In his encyclical on modernism on 8th September 1907, St. Pius X again takes up his responsibility as teacher and guardian of the faith. He begins with the following words:

"One of the primary obligations assigned by Christ to the office divinely committed to Us of feeding the Lord's flock is that of guarding with the greatest vigilance the Deposit of the Faith delivered to the Saints, rejecting the profane novelties of words and the gainsaying of knowledge falsely so called. There has never been a time when this watchfulness of the supreme pastor was not necessary to the Catholic body, for, owing to the efforts of the enemy of the human race, there have never been lacking "men speaking perverse things" (Titus 1:10), "vain talkers and seducers" (Acts 20:30), "erring and driving into error." (2 Tim. 3:13). It must, however, be confessed that these latter days have witnessed a notable increase in the number of the enemies of the Cross of Christ, who, by arts entirely new and full of deceit, are striving to destroy the vital energy of the Church, and, as far as in them lies, utterly to subvert the very Kingdom of Christ. Wherefore We may no longer keep silence, lest We should seem to fail in Our most sacred duty, and lest the kindness that, in the hope of wiser counsels, We have hitherto shown them, should be set down to lack of diligence in the discharge of Our office."

This saintly pope faced a world which he saw as on the verge of apostasy and he did his job as Pope. We can get a sense of the heart of the man by his writings and the spirit of faith with which he lived as St. Paul says: "the just man lives by Faith." For us too with us, there is only one answer to the evils that surround us on all sides, a return to the living of our faith in a practical and realistic way. Let us beg Our Lady to intercede for us so that our thinking and acting can be more influenced by reason illuminated by faith and that we are working to restore all things in Christ in the small societies in which we live our lives.

In the Sacred Heart, through the Immaculate heart of Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Curtis". The script is cursive and fluid, with a small dot above the "i" in "Curtis".

Fr. Christopher Curtis
Spiritual Director of the Third Order of SSPX
For Australia