



'Legio Sanctae Familiae' The Legion of the Holy Family

Under the Patronage of
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
The Immaculate Heart of Mary
The Most Chaste Heart of St Joseph



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My last article closed with a quote from Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae* where he outlined the purpose of the letter.

"We deem it expedient in this letter to define more in detail the duties of the Catholics, inasmuch as these would, if strictly observed, wonderfully contribute to the good of the commonwealth."

Catholics are struggling in the modern world where we have to contend with continual anti-Catholic propaganda. We also have to contend with a Catholic hierarchy, within the ranks of which, there are men who seek to undermine infallible Catholic Church teaching especially in the area of human sexuality. Catholics should not be surprised at this especially when we consider the apostle Judas. Judas was hand-picked by Jesus Christ and yet he went astray. Jesus Christ did not conform to how Judas wanted the Messiah to behave and so the disgruntled Judas sold Him out.

Catholics worried about the current situation within the Catholic Church would do well to contemplate the words of Our Lord in chapter twenty-four of St Matthew's Gospel. They contain a warning but also a great comfort.

"Take heed that no man seduce you: For many will come in my name saying, I am Christ: and they will seduce many. And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled. For these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes in places: Now all these are the beginnings of sorrows.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall put you to death: and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be scandalized: and shall betray one another: and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall seduce many. And because iniquity has abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold.

But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved." (Matthew 24:4-13)

The Catholic Encyclopaedia of 1917 explains the gift of the indefectibility of the Catholic Church very well.

"Among the prerogatives conferred on His Church by Christ is the gift of indefectibility. By this term is signified, not merely that the Church will persist to the end of time, but further, that it will preserve unimpaired its essential characteristics. The Church can never undergo any constitutional change which will make it, as a social organism, something different from what it was originally.



Pope Leo XIII

It can never become corrupt in faith or in morals; nor can it ever lose the Apostolic hierarchy, or the sacraments through which Christ communicates grace to men. The gift of indefectibility is expressly promised to the Church by Christ, in the words in which He declares that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

It is manifest that, could the storms which the Church encounters so shake it as to alter its essential characteristics and make it other than Christ intended it to be, the gates of hell, i.e. the powers of evil, would have prevailed. It is clear, too, that could the Church suffer substantial change, it would no longer be an instrument capable of accomplishing the work for which God called it in to being. He established it that it might be to all men the school of holiness. This it would cease to be if ever it could set up a false and corrupt moral standard.

He established it to proclaim His revelation to the world, and charged it to warn all men that unless they accepted that message they must perish everlastingly. Could the Church, in defining the truths of revelation err in the smallest point, such a charge would be impossible.

Nobody could enforce under such a penalty the acceptance of what might be erroneous. By the

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hierarchy and the sacraments, Christ, further, made the Church the depositary of the graces of the Passion. Were it to lose either of these, it could no longer dispense to men the treasures of grace.”

In the troubling time in which we live it is important that we understand what the Catholic Church is and what the gift of indefectibility is. Otherwise we could end up running around like the proverbial headless chicken or end up leaving the safety of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Encyclopaedia continues:

“The gift of indefectibility plainly does not guarantee each several part of the Church against heresy or apostasy. The promise is made to the corporate body. Individual Churches may become corrupt in morals, may fall into heresy, may even apostatize.”

The same is true of individuals. There is no shortage of heretics and apostates in the history of the Catholic Church. However, our minds are better served by looking to the saints rather than focusing on the heretic and the apostate. St Paul tells the Philippians.

“For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things.” **(Philippians 4:8)**

Our life and our behaviour is here on earth is shaped by what we think on. We can be certain of Christ’s promise for His Church and He will not leave us orphans. Here’s the Catholic Encyclopaedia again.

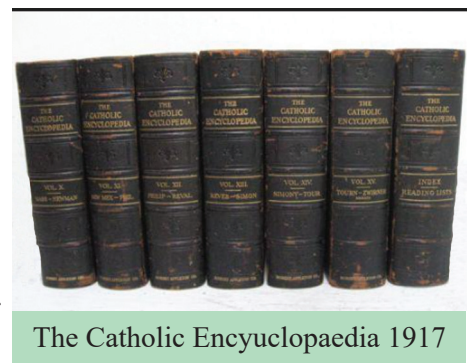
“It was said above that one part of the Church’s gift of indefectibility lies in her preservation from any substantial corruption in the sphere of morals. This supposes, not merely that she will always proclaim the perfect standard of morality bequeathed to her by her Founder, but also that in every age the lives of many of her children will be based on that sublime model.

Only a supernatural principle of spiritual life could bring this about. Man’s natural tendency is downwards. The force of every religious movement gradually spends itself; and the followers of great religious reformers tend in time to the level of their environment. According to the laws of unassisted human nature, it should have been thus with the society established by Christ.

Yet history shows us that the Catholic Church possesses a power of reform from within, which has no parallel in any other religious organization. Again and again she produces saints, men imitating the virtues of Christ in an extraordinary degree, whose influence, spreading far and wide, gives fresh ardour even to those who reach a less heroic standard.

Thus, to cite one or two well-known instances out of many that might be given: St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi rekindled the love of virtue in the men of the thirteenth century; St. Philip Neri and St. Ignatius Loyola accomplished a like work in the sixteenth century; St. Paul of the Cross and St. Alphonsus Liguori, in the eighteenth.

No explanation suffices to account for this phenomenon save the Catholic doctrine that the Church is not a natural but a supernatural society, that the preservation of her moral life depends, not on any laws of human nature, but on the life-giving presence of the Holy Ghost.”



The Catholic Encyclopaedia 1917

The Catholic Church must pass through many storms as the ancient enemy seeks to destroy her and to lead her children astray, but the Holy Ghost will always inspire men to great holiness as and when the need arises. We need have no fear of the Catholic Church collapsing. The only thing we should fear is that we ourselves will go astray by not trusting in the Divine Promise that the gates of Hell will not prevail against the Catholic Church. We are called to become the saints for our times.

With this secure foundation we need to concentrate all our efforts on becoming Holy. We are called to become the saints for our times. Catholic parents must raise the future Saints who will combat the errors of our day and we must help our fellow man to become a Saint too.

This is what Pope Leo XIII seeks to help us to do by pointing to our duties as Catholics. If we concentrate on these duties and on overcoming our constant failures in these matters, we will have little time to be engaged in or distracted with the controversies raging around us and we will become holy. God’s will is found within the common duties of our state in life. Back to Pope Leo XIII.

“It cannot be doubted that duties more numerous and of greater moment devolve on Catholics than upon such as are either not sufficiently enlightened in relation to the Catholic faith, or who are entirely unacquainted with its doctrines. Considering that forthwith upon salvation being brought out for mankind, Jesus Christ laid upon His Apostles the injunction to “preach the Gospel to every creature,” He imposed, it is evident, upon all men the duty of learning thoroughly and believing what they were taught.

This duty is intimately bound up with the gaining of eternal salvation: “He that believes and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believes not, shall be condemned.”(Mark 16:16) But the man who has embraced the Christian faith, as in duty bound, is by that very fact a subject of the Church as one of the children born of her, and becomes a member of that greatest and holiest body, which it is the special charge of the Roman Pontiff to rule with supreme power, under its invisible head, Jesus Christ.” **(Sapientiae Christianae 4)**

Those of us who are Catholic are especially privileged, but with that privilege comes a corresponding and

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weightier duty. We are called to be the leaven within the societies we live in. We are called to bear a clear and distinct witness to the Truths of our Catholic Faith regardless of the hostilities we may encounter or of where those hostilities originate.

In these times of growing dissent from Catholic Church teaching within certain ranks of the hierarchy, we must be very careful how we speak to others of Church matters. We must not inadvertently inflict any damage on the Church ourselves by careless talk which does nothing to build up the Church. It is easy to find fault, especially if there is a mirror to hand, but we cannot correct our own faults by pointing out the faults of others. There are times when we need to speak out to defend Catholic Church teachings that are being undermined, but all the while we must continue to work on our own sanctification.

“Now, if the natural law enjoins us to love devotedly and to defend the country in which we had birth, and in which we were brought up, so that every good citizen hesitates not to face death for his native land, very much more is it the urgent duty of Christians to be ever quickened by like feelings toward the Church. For the Church is the holy City of the living God, born of God Himself, and by Him built up and established. Upon this earth, indeed, she accomplishes her pilgrimage, but by instructing and guiding men she summons them to eternal happiness. We are bound, then, to love dearly the country whence we have received the means of enjoyment this mortal life affords, but we have a much more urgent obligation to love, with ardent love, the Church to which we owe the life of the soul, a life that will endure forever. For fitting it is to prefer the good of the soul to the well-being of the body, inasmuch as duties toward God are of a far more hallowed character than those toward men.” **(Sapientiae Christianae 5)**

We must have great solicitude for the Catholic Church and we should weep for any cleric who undermines the sacred teachings of the Catholic Church or who falls from the state of grace. But we must also take great care that we do not fall into the trap of constantly bemoaning the failures of others. The solution is always the same – personal holiness. We will help to build up and to restore the Catholic Church only in the measure that we become holy ourselves. It is not an easy task and it is so easy to fall into the way of grumbling and complaining about how bad things are getting. But the Catholic Church always keeps the path of martyrdom before our eyes.

“Moreover, if we would judge aright, the supernatural love for the Church and the natural love of our own country proceed from the same eternal principle, since God Himself is their Author and originating Cause. Consequently, it follows that between the duties they respectively enjoin, neither can come into collision with the other. We can, certainly, and should love ourselves, bear ourselves kindly toward our fellow men, nourish affection for the State and the governing powers; but at the same time we can and must cherish toward the Church a feeling of filial piety, and love God with the deepest love of which we are capable.

The order of precedence of these duties is, however, at times, either under stress of public calamities, or through the perverse will of men, inverted. For,

instances occur where the State seems to require from men as subjects one thing, and religion, from men as Christians, quite another; and this in reality without any other ground, than that the rulers of the State either hold the sacred power of the Church of no account, or endeavour to subject it to their own will. Hence arises a conflict, and an occasion, through such conflict, of virtue being put to the proof. The two powers are confronted and urge their behests in a contrary sense; to obey both is wholly impossible. No man can serve two masters, (Matthew 6:24) for to please the one amounts to condemning the other.” **(Sapientiae Christianae 6)**

This is the struggle that men of all ages are faced with. At times this struggle enters within the Catholic Church herself, with men in authority putting forward contrary positions whilst each claims to speak for the Catholic Church. This is why it is so important for Catholics to study the timeless and unchanging teachings of the Catholic Church. It is these teachings, which form part of the Church’s indefectibility, which will preserve us from going astray. We live in dangerous times where the power of the evil one is very strong and where he continues to roam about looking for souls to devour.

“Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation: Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you.

Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith: knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world.” **(1 Peter 5:6-9)**

It is adherence to our Catholic faith that gives us the power to resist the wiles of the evil one and our love for the Church must be built on the supernatural foundation of sanctifying grace. So let us never give up hope or give in to despairing thoughts. Christ has allotted us work to do for the building up of His Kingdom. Let us busy ourselves with that work, while we still have time.

To be cont’d...

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