



## **‘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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In the first article in this series Pope Pius XI teaches us that education must serve the final end of man which is to attain eternal salvation in Heaven. This must be the primary purpose of education, otherwise, what passes for education will be faulty and will lead eventually to the corruption of children.

“It is therefore as important to make no mistake in education, as it is to make no mistake in the pursuit of the last end, with which the whole work of education is intimately and necessarily connected.” (**Divini Illius Magistri 7**)

Pope Leo XIII warned us in *‘Sapientiae Christianae’* that, those ‘leagued together in wickedness’, will destroy the natural foundations of civil society if they get their way. He also warned us that some men are working to destroy the traditional family “utterly, root and branch.”

Those who are involved in the battle to save the Catholic family and to save Catholic education must become aware of the great depth of the evil that we are confronting. This evil has permeated every facet of our western democracies and has even managed to enter into the minds of some Catholics, even those of high rank within the Catholic Church.

We must not allow this to discourage us, because discouragement always comes from the evil one. But we must keep our focus on Jesus Christ and on what He teaches us through the Catholic Church. We must also come to a full understanding of the problems that we are dealing with and that is why Pope Pius XI wrote the encyclical letter *‘Divini Illius Magistri’*.

After outlining the primary purpose of education, Pope Pius XI proceeds to teach us about the three societies into which man is born. Each of these societies has distinct functions and distinct though sometimes overlapping, spheres of authority. A grave danger arises where one society seeks to usurp the privileges and authority of another. Let us look at what Pope Pius XI teaches us.

“Education is essentially a social and not a mere individual activity. Now there are three necessary

By the “end of man” we mean  
the purpose for which he was created:  
namely, to know, love, and serve God.



St Peter's Basilica in Rome

societies, distinct from one another and yet harmoniously combined by God, into which man is born: two, namely the family and civil society, belong to the natural order; the third, the Church, to the supernatural order.” (**Divini Illius Magistri 11**)

“In the first place comes the family, instituted directly by God for its peculiar purpose, the generation and formation of offspring; for this reason it has priority of nature and therefore of rights over civil society. Nevertheless, the family is an imperfect society, since it has not in itself all the means for its own complete development; whereas civil society is a perfect society, having in itself all the means for its peculiar end, which is the temporal well-being of the community; and so, in this respect, that is, in view of the common good, it has pre-eminence over the family, which finds its own suitable temporal perfection precisely in civil society.” (**Divini Illius Magistri 12**)

It is well to dwell on the points being made here. The family is antecedent to civil society, therefore, it does not acquire its rights and duties from civil society but directly from God. The father, as head of the family, is answerable to God for how he lives his life as a husband and for how he carries out his family duties. It is a wondrous and tremendous responsibility.

But the family is an imperfect society. This is a nuanced use of the word ‘imperfect’. It does not indicate that

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there is anything inherently wrong with the family, but that each individual family is dependent on others in order to reach the Heavenly goal and to help others to reach that Heavenly goal as well.

This is where the civil society comes from. The necessities of families, which they cannot provide out of their own limited resources, gives birth to civil society. Civil society, through its institutions, is primarily charged with completing what is lacking in the family as an individual unit. It has a duty to provide for families what they cannot provide for themselves. Some examples of this would be the roads between towns and cities, the electricity grid, and the legal system. No individual family would be able to provide these benefits to society by themselves but, by pooling their resources within civil society, these facilities for improving the common good can be provided.

Civil society should be at the service of families. That is the sole reason for its existence. Individual families attain their temporal perfection within civil society. These families have a duty to raise their children to be good citizens who will serve the common good of the greater society. They will assist others to attain their ultimate end, which is Heaven. Jesus Christ speaks of this as the second of the great commandments - "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 22:39)

"The third society, into which man is born when through Baptism he reaches the divine life of grace, is the Church; a society of the supernatural order and of universal extent; a perfect society, because it has in itself all the means required for its own end, which is the eternal salvation of mankind; hence it is supreme in its own domain." (**Divini Illius Magistri 13**)

The Catholic Church is of supernatural origin being founded by Jesus Christ, the second person of the Most Holy Trinity. It is a Divine institution with the charism of indefectibility. Members of the Catholic Church can teach error in a personal capacity but the Catholic Church as a Divine institution cannot teach error or bind man to error. This is an important point in these times of great confusion, but it is best dealt with elsewhere. What must be understood is that the authority of the Catholic Church to teach, is greater than that of the other societies. Nonetheless, each of the three societies has a role to play in education.

"Consequently, education which is concerned with man as a whole, individually and socially, in the order of nature and in the order of grace, necessarily belongs to all these three societies, in due proportion, corresponding, according to the disposition of Divine Providence, to the co-ordination of their respecting ends." (**Divini Illius Magistri 14**)

"And first of all education belongs pre-eminently to the Church, by reason of a double title in the supernatural



Individual Families Cannot Build Infrastructure

order, conferred exclusively upon her by God Himself; absolutely superior therefore to any other title in the natural order. (**Divini Illius Magistri 15**)

Pope Pius XI now elucidates in great detail the Church's entitlements in education before examining the natural societies of family and state.

"The first title is founded upon the express mission and supreme authority to teach, given her by her divine Founder: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Upon this magisterial office Christ conferred infallibility, together with the command to teach His doctrine. Hence the Church "was set by her divine Author as the pillar and ground of truth, in order to teach the divine Faith to men, and keep whole and inviolate the deposit confided to her; to direct and fashion men, in all their actions individually and socially, to purity of morals and integrity of life, in accordance with revealed doctrine." (Epistle to the Archbishop of Freiburg, "Quum non sine," 14 July 1864.) (**Divini Illius Magistri 16**)

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It is within the Catholic Church that the deposit of faith is preserved whole and intact. The Pope and the bishops are bound to protect this deposit of faith and to teach it to all men. Jesus Christ did not command the apostles to go out and listen to all men, He commanded them to teach what had been handed to them. The apostle need not have any fear when he teaches according to the deposit of faith, because he can be sure that his teaching is free from error. This is a major problem today, especially with the novelty of the new 'synodal process' which places the emphasis on listening rather than on teaching. It is as if the Catholic Church is unsure of what she has been commanded to teach and this leads to confusion amongst the faithful who are not so well up on Catholic doctrine in these matters.

“The second title is the supernatural motherhood, in virtue of which the Church, spotless spouse of Christ, generates, nurtures and educates souls in the divine life of grace, with her Sacraments and her doctrine. With good reason then does St. Augustine maintain: “He has not God for father who refuses to have the Church as mother.”(De Symbolo ad catech., XIII ) **(Divini Illius Magistri 17)**

This is simply saying that it is God who has entrusted the role of teacher to the Catholic Church, as a mother entrusted with the charge of instructing her children in faith and virtue.

“Hence it is that in this proper object of her mission, that is, “in faith and morals, God Himself has made the Church sharer in the divine magisterium and, by a special privilege, granted her immunity from error; hence she is the mistress of men, supreme and absolutely sure, and she has inherent in herself an inviolable right to freedom in teaching.’ (Pope Leo XIII - Libertas Praestantissimum 1888 - No 27)

By necessary consequence the Church is independent of any sort of earthly power as well in the origin as in the exercise of her mission as educator, not merely in regard to her proper end and object, but also in regard to the means necessary and suitable to attain that end. Hence with regard to every other kind of human learning and instruction, which is the common patrimony of individuals and society, the Church has an independent right to make use of it, and above all to decide what may help or harm Christian education.

And this must be so, because the Church as a perfect society has an independent right to the means conducive to its end, and because every form of instruction, no less than every human action, has a necessary connection with man's last end, and therefore cannot be withdrawn from the dictates of the divine law, of which the Church is guardian, interpreter and infallible mistress. **(Divini Illius Magistri 18)**

Pope Pius XI makes a strong and bold claim here. He is teaching us that, because the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ, it is not bound by any earthly power in accomplishing the mission entrusted



The Laws of God are Above the Laws of Man

to her by Jesus Christ. Of course this claim of absolute autonomy will be contested by corrupt civil powers because they seek to build an earthly kingdom of men, which will always be opposed to the rule of the Catholic Church. They misunderstand what the Catholic Church is saying. The Catholic Church, as we will see later, is not opposed to the temporal powers, just to the abusive use of those powers which act against the last end of man.

The divine law is superior to civil law and civil law must not contradict divine law or prevent men from worshipping God as He desires to be worshipped. Therefore the Catholic Church is entitled to a role in education. Pope Pius XI now brings in Pope Pius X to confirm what he is saying.

“This truth is clearly set forth by Pius X of saintly memory: Whatever a Christian does even in the order of things of earth, he may not overlook the supernatural; indeed he must, according to the teaching of Christian wisdom, direct all things towards the supreme good as to his last end; all his actions, besides, in so far as good or evil in the order of morality, that is, in keeping or not with natural and divine law, fall under the judgment and jurisdiction of the Church.” (Pope Pius X - Singulari Quadam - No 3) **(Divini Illius Magistri 18)**

Pope Pius X is writing about the formation of Labour Organisations. As is always the case with the Catholic Church, he points to the last end of man and how to achieve that end. He says “Accordingly, We first of all declare that all Catholics have a sacred and inviolable duty, both in private and public life, to obey and firmly adhere to and fearlessly profess the principles of Christian truth enunciated by the teaching office of the Catholic Church.” **(Singulari Quadam 2)**

In every field of endeavour, the Catholic is called to fearlessly and publicly defend Catholic principles. This is especially the case when it comes to our children, because these cannot defend and protect themselves. That is why our Lord issued such a grave warning concerning the corruption of children.

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6)