

FOR THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

ALLOCUTION OF POPE ST. PIUS X

TO THE BISHOPS ASSEMBLED IN ROME ON THE
ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER 12, 1904 A.D.

It is notable that when receiving the bishops in audience on this solemn occasion, the Holy Father thought it well to emphasize only two points in the course of a brief Allocution. [1]

The times are becoming difficult and distressing for the Catholic Church; but let us not be troubled. On earth the Church is militant; it is for us to be the captains who lead the armies into battle. Have we not the certainty of victory as a powerful incentive? Always before our eyes are these divine words: *I have not come to send peace but the sword.* [2] *If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you.* [3] *But have confidence, I have overcome the world.* [4]

If we know how to make ourselves the light of the world by our teaching, and the salt of the earth by our example; to put it in a word, if we employ the resources of virtue and doctrine that Paul enjoined on his own disciples, Titus and Timothy, namely sanctity and perfection of life, strength in teaching, the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial, active and enlightened zeal, charity that is at once strong and gentle, then we will win the love and veneration of the good, yea and the esteem and respect even of our enemies.

The task which lies before us is difficult; let us find our support and strength in the loving providence of him who, when he sent his own apostles into the world as lambs among wolves, reassured them and

encouraged them to have no fear, being confident that he would always be at their side: *Behold I am with, you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* [5]

On the other hand, when we measure our own meager strength against the difficulty of the task, we will always be brought to the realization that we are but worthless instruments in the hands of the Lord, and we will have recourse to him in our trying needs. He will hear our prayer and enable us to say: *I can do all things in him who strengthens me.* [6]

Venerable brethren, there is only one piece of advice that I offer to you: watch over your seminaries and over candidates for the priesthood.

As you yourselves know, an air of independence which is fatal for souls is widely diffused in the world, and has found its way even within the sanctuary; it shows itself not only in relation to authority but also in regard to doctrine.

Because of it, some of our young clerics, animated by that spirit of unbridled criticism which holds sway at the present day, have come to lose all respect for the learning which comes from our great teachers, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, the interpreters of revealed doctrine.

If ever you have in your seminary one of those new-style savants, get rid of him without delay; on no account impose hands upon him. You will always regret having ordained even one such person: never will you regret having excluded him. [7]

FOOTNOTES

1. Acta Sanctae Sedis xxxvii, p. 433-436.
2. Mt. 10:34.
3. Jn. 15:20.
4. Jn. 16:33.
5. Mt. 28:20.
6. Phil. 4:13.
7. Cf. Decree *Vetuit* of the Sacred Congregation of the Council (22 December 1905), forbidding in principle the admission into a seminary of any cleric or layman who was previously dismissed from another seminary by the local Ordinary (Acta Sanctae Sedis XXXVIII, p. 407)