

*Catholic Church: Pope (1939-1958: Pius XII)  
Orientalis ecclesiae decus  
ACA 2657*



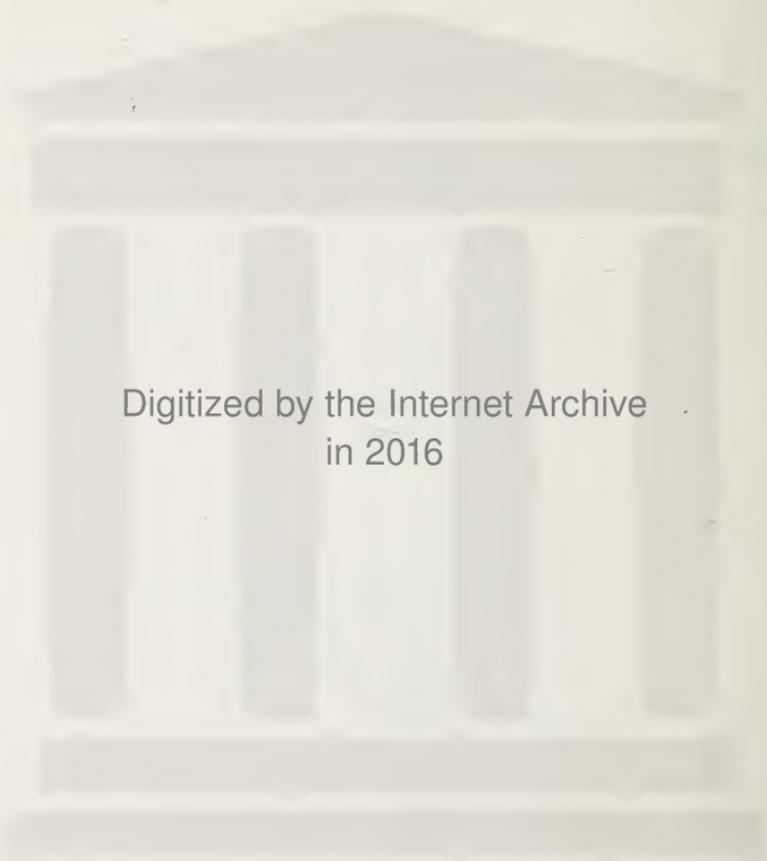
# **ORIENTALIS ECCLESIAE DECUS**

**ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
OF  
POPE PIUS XII  
ON**

**St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria  
On the Fifteenth Centenary  
of His Most Holy Death**



**National Catholic Welfare Conference**  
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.      Washington 5, D. C.



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*To the Venerable Brethren  
The Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops,  
Bishops and Other Ordinaries  
Having Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See*

## POPE PIUS XII

### VENERABLE BRETHREN

#### HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BLESSING

1. The Church has always exalted with the highest praise St. Cyril Patriarch of Alexandria, as the glory of the Eastern Church and the most noble defender of the Virgin Mother of God. We wish now, in writing of him, briefly to recall to mind these encomiums, at the close of the fifteenth century since he happily exchanged this earthly exile for his heavenly home. Our Predecessor St. Celestine I calls him indeed "good defender of the faith",<sup>1</sup> "most worthy priest"<sup>2</sup> and "apostolic man".<sup>3</sup> The Oecumenical Council of Chalcedon not only invokes the aid of his doctrine to detect and refute new errors, but even does not hesitate to compare it with the wisdom of St. Leo the Great.<sup>4</sup> St. Leo in his turn praises and recommends the writings of so great a doctor, precisely because they are in full conformity with the faith of the Holy Fathers.<sup>5</sup> With no less veneration did the fifth Oecumenical Council, assembled at Constantinople,<sup>6</sup> regard the authority of St. Cyril; and many years later, during the controversy on the two wills in Christ, his doctrine was once again deservedly and triumphantly vindicated, both in the first Lateran Council<sup>7</sup> and in the sixth Oecumenical Council, after some had wrongly alleged that it was tainted with the errors of the Monothelites. Indeed, according to the testimony of Our holy Predecessor Agatho, he "was the defender of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ep. 12, 4: MIGNE, *P. L.*, L, 467.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 13, 2: *ib.*, 471.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 25, 7: *ib.*, 552.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. MANSI, VI, 953, 956-7, VII, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ep. ad Imp. Theodosium*: MIGNE, *P. L.*, LIV, 891.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. MANSI, IX, 231 sq.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. MANSI, X, 1076 sq.

truth”<sup>8</sup> and stood out as “the most constant preacher of the orthodox faith”.<sup>9</sup>

2. We deem it therefore very opportune, in this brief letter, to present his absolute integrity of life, his faith and his virtue, for the consideration of all, but especially of those who, being of the Eastern Church, rightly glory in this luminary of Christian wisdom, this athlete of apostolic fortitude. Of noble origin and, according to tradition, raised to the See of Alexandria in the year 412, he first combated the Novatians and other corrupters and detractors of pure doctrine, both by word of mouth and by the publication of his writings and decrees, giving proof of unequalled vigilance and courage. Then, with the dissemination throughout the East of the impious heresy of Nestorius, he, like the watchful Pastor that he was, speedily detected the new errors which were being widely diffused, used every means to keep them away from the flock entrusted to his care and was for all that time, and especially during the course of the Council of Ephesus, the most learned doctor and indomitable defender of the divine maternity of the Virgin Mary, the hypostatic union in Christ and the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. Since, however, Our immediate Predecessor, Pius XI of happy memory, on the occurrence of the fifteenth centenary of that Council in the year 1931 admirably described and illustrated in His Encyclical Letter *Lux Veritatis*<sup>10</sup> the eminent part played by St. Cyril in this most important controversy, We deem it superfluous to repeat it in detail.

3. Cyril was not satisfied, however, with strenuously combating the onrush of heresy, with resolutely and diligently safeguarding the integrity of Catholic doctrine and zealously bringing it into the full light of day, but he endeavoured by all the means in his power to bring back to the path of truth and rectitude the brethren who had gone astray. The Bishops of the province of Antioch, for example, would not recognize the authority of the sacred Council of Ephesus and it was due to the zeal of St. Cyril that, after long hesitation, they returned at last to full concord and harmony. And when he had succeeded, with the help of God, in securing this most happy peace and in

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. MANSI, XI, 270 sq.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ib.*, 262 sq.

<sup>10</sup> A. A. S., XXIII (1931), p. 493 sq.

defending it with diligent care against all who might disturb it, being ripe for his eternal reward and heavenly glory, amidst the tears of al good men he departed this life in the year 444.

4. The faithful of the Eastern Rite not only number him among the “Oecumenical Fathers”, but also honour him in their liturgical prayers with the highest terms of praise. “Why thy mind illumined by the fire of the Holy Spirit—so the Greeks sing of him in the *Menei*, appointed to be celebrated on the 9th day of June—like the sun darting forth its rays thou didst pour forth thy inspired words; thou, O most blessed and divine one, didst launch forth thy dogmas to all parts of the Christian world, illuminating all classes of persons, dissipating the darkness of heresy through the strength and power of Him who, born of a Virgin, shone with light ineffable”. And certainly it is with justice that the children of the Eastern Church rejoice in honouring this most holy Father, as the signal glory of their Rite. For in him shone forth in a most special way those three virtues, which the other Eastern Fathers also possessed to a marked degree: namely, an extraordinary holiness of life, in which is especially resplendent an ardent devotion to the great Mother of God; a doctrine truly admirable, on account of which the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in a decree promulgated on July 28th, 1882, declared him Doctor of the Universal Church; and finally an active and zealous watchfulness, in virtue of which he repulsed the assaults of the heretics with indomitable courage, asserted and defended the Catholic faith and tirelessly propagated it to the limit of his powers.

5. But while We rejoice with all Our heart that all the Christian peoples of the East honour St. Cyril with special devotion, nevertheless We are grieved that all have not come together in that unity so greatly to be desired, which he so ardently loved and promoted. This especially do We deplore in these days of ours, when it behooves all Christians to stand together in the one Church of Jesus Christ, united in mind and strength so that, forming a single phalanx, solid, immovable and in complete harmony, they may resist the assaults of impiety, which daily grow more and more threatening.

6. To bring this about it is absolutely necessary that all, following in the footsteps of St. Cyril, should secure that

harmony of soul, which must be sustained by that triple principle with which Christ Jesus, Founder of the Church, wished it to be indissolubly bound together, as by a divine and unbreakable bond, established by Himself; that is to say, union in the One Catholic faith, in a single love for God and for all men, and finally in a common obedience and submission to the lawful hierarchy constituted by the Divine Redeemer Himself. These three bonds of union, as you well know, Venerable Brethren, are so necessary, that if one of them is lacking, true unity and concord in the Church cannot even be conceived.

## I

7. Now in the task of earnestly pursuing and energetically preserving this genuine unity, We desire that the Patriarch of Alexandria should, at this present time, be to all a master and most illustrious model, even as he was during his own stormy epoch. And, to begin by treating of the unity of the Christian faith, We may say that his constant readiness and tenacity in defending it are universally known: “We—he declares—who have truth for our friend, and the dogmas of truth, will never follow the heretics, but continuing in the path of faith traced out for us by the Holy Fathers, we will guard the deposit of divine revelation against all errors”.<sup>11</sup> And in fighting the good fight even unto death he was ready to undergo the bitterest trials. “My dearest wish—he writes—is to labour, live and die for the faith, which is in Christ”.<sup>12</sup> “No insult, therefore, no contumely, no outrage shall move me . . . It matters only that the faith be preserved intact and secure”.<sup>13</sup> And desiring with all the strength of his noble soul the palm of martyrdom, he voiced these most admirable sentiments: “I am resolved to endure any labour for the faith of Christ, to bear any torments, even those considered to be the most excruciating, until at length I suffer death, which I shall joyfully accept in this cause”.<sup>14</sup> “For if we fear to preach the truth for the glory of God lest forsooth we experience some trouble, how can we ever, I pray, have the face to

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. in Ioann., l. X; MIGNE, *P. G.*, LXXIV, 419.

<sup>12</sup> Ep. 10: MIGNE, *P. G.*, LXXVII, 78.

<sup>13</sup> Ep. 9: *ib.*, 62.

<sup>14</sup> Ep. 10: *ib.*, 70.

exalt before our people the contests and triumphs of the holy martyrs?"<sup>15</sup>

8. And since in the monasteries of Egypt there were frequent acrimonious disputes concerning the new Nestorian heresy, he, like a most vigilant Pastor, advises the monks of the dangerous fallacies of this doctrine, not for the purpose of heaping fuel on the fire of these wordy conflicts, "but—as he writes to them—so that, if in the future any of the heretics should assail you, you may not only avoid falling into these errors yourselves, but, refuting with the eternal truth their vain trivialities, you may induce others, with opportune arguments and, like good brethren, to preserve steadfastly in their souls the faith which was handed down to the Churches by the holy Apostles"<sup>16</sup> As all will readily admit who have read the letters which he wrote on the occasion of the controversy in the province of Antioch, he shows in the clearest manner that this Christian faith, which we must preserve and defend by all the means in our power, has been transmitted to us through the Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the holy Fathers,<sup>17</sup> and is at the same time clearly and lawfully proposed for our belief by the living and infallible authority of the Church. For when the Bishops of the Province of Antioch, for the re-establishment and preservation of peace, deemed it sufficient merely to adhere to the Nicene profession of faith, St. Cyril, on the contrary, while holding fast to the Nicene Creed, further required of his brethren in the Episcopate, for the purpose of strengthening unity, the reprobation and condemnation of the Nestorian heresy. He knew very well that it is not enough to accept with docile mind the ancient documents of ecclesiastical teaching, but it is also necessary to receive with a loyal and submissive heart all those definitions which the Church, in virtue of her supreme authority, from time to time proposes for our belief. Indeed, it is not lawful, even under the pretext of restoring harmony, to dissimulate a single dogma of faith, for, to quote the warning of the Patriarch of Alexandria: "the desire for peace is the highest and most excellent of all goods . . . but not for that cause should we disregard the virtue of filial piety in Christ"<sup>18</sup> Wherefore, the longed-for return

<sup>15</sup> Ep. 9: *ib.*, 63.

<sup>16</sup> Ep. 1: *ib.*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ep. 55: *ib.*, 292-293.

<sup>18</sup> Ep. 61: *ib.*, 325.

of erring sons to a sincere and perfect unity in Christ is not to be brought about by that method which seeks out those points of doctrine on the acceptance of which all, or at least the greater number of communities, which glory in the name of Christian, are agreed; but rather by that which sets forth all the truths revealed by God, integrally and without exception, as the basis for harmony and agreement among the faithful.

9. In this tireless energy in preserving and defending the unity of the faith let St. Cyril of Alexandria be an example to all. Hardly had he detected the error of Nestorius than he refuted it by his letters and other writings. He had recourse to the Roman Pontiff and in the Council of Ephesus, acting as His representative, he repressed and condemned the heresy which was even then gathering strength; this he did with such a display of admirable doctrine and dauntless courage that all the Fathers of the Council, after the public reading of that letter of Cyril which is called dogmatic, with solemn deliberation pronounced it to be in absolute conformity with purity of faith. But besides this, on account of his apostolic activity he was wickedly deprived of his Episcopal office and endured with unconquerable serenity the insults of his brethren, condemnation by an unlawful assembly, and many imprisonments and sufferings. With a like courage he did not hesitate, in the conscientious fulfillment of his most holy office, to oppose openly, not only the Bishops who were wandering from the right path of truth and unity, but even the august person of the Emperor himself. Furthermore, as is known to all, for the purpose of fostering and safeguarding the Christian faith, he composed an almost countless number of books, from which shine forth the luminous rays of his extraordinary wisdom, his indomitable firmness and the earnestness of his pastoral zeal.

## II

10. To faith must be closely allied the virtue of charity, by which we are united one with another and with Christ; inspired and actuated by the holy Spirit it joins together the members of the Mystical Body of the Redeemer in an unbreakable bond. This charity must not, however, refuse to receive into its embrace the erring ones who have wandered from the right path; and of this we have an example in the admirable mode of action followed by St. Cyril. For

although he fought strenuously against the Nestorian heresy, nevertheless, animated as he was by a burning charity, he openly asserts that he yields to none in the profession of his love for Nestorius.<sup>19</sup> And rightly so; for those who stray from the right path are to be regarded as ailing brethren and treated with kind and gentle care. In this regard it will be useful to recall the extremely prudent advice given by the Patriarch of Alexandria. "In this matter—he counsels—there is need of great moderation".<sup>20</sup> "For it often happens that harsh disputes urge many on to insolence, and it is better to deal mildly with those who resist authority than by insisting too much on fine points of the law to create difficulties for them. If they were ill in body they would have to be treated by the practised hand of the doctor; in the same way the sick soul must be cured with a certain prudence, used as medicine for the body. As a result they will come little by little to the desired sincerity and stability of mind".<sup>21</sup> And elsewhere he adds: "We have imitated the patient diligence of skilful doctors: they do not proceed with fire and steel against diseases and wounds as soon as they manifest themselves in the human body, but having first treated the wound with the milder medicaments, they defer the use of cautery and scalpel until the opportune moment".<sup>22</sup> Being thus filled with compassion and mildness for the erring, he openly declares that he is most desirous of peace and absolutely opposed to quarrels and disputes: one, in fine, who ardently wishes to love all and to be loved in his turn by all".<sup>23</sup>

11. This marked inclination of the Holy Doctor for concord and harmony was especially noticeable when, mitigating his previous attitude of severity, he applied himself with all earnestness to winning over the Bishops of the province of Antioch to the cause of peace. Treating of their delegate, he writes among other things: "Perhaps he suspected that he would have great difficulty in convincing us of the necessity of uniting the Churches in peace and concord, and thus putting an end to the mockery of the heretics and repelling the assaults of diabolical wickedness. But on the contrary he found us so well disposed to

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ep. 9: *ib.*, 62.

<sup>20</sup> Ep. 57: *ib.*, 322.

<sup>21</sup> Ep. 58: *ib.*, 322.

<sup>22</sup> Ep. 18: *ib.*, 123-126.

<sup>23</sup> Ep. 9: *ib.*, 62.

this idea that he had hardly any trouble at all. For we are mindful of the words of Our Saviour: ‘peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you’”.<sup>24</sup> And when the 12 Articles composed by St. Cyril at the Synod of Alexandria proved an obstacle to the dawning of this peace—since these Articles spoke of the “physical union” in Christ, they were rejected by the Antiochians as heretical—this most benign Patriarch, while not condemning or disowning these writings, since what they set forth is orthodox doctrine, yet by means of several letters explained his meaning so clearly as to remove even the least appearance of error and to render yet more smooth the path of peace. These explanations he gave to the Bishops “not as to opponents but brethren”.<sup>25</sup> For, in his opinion, “for the peace of the Churches, and to avoid their being separated one from another through the diversity of opinions, such condescension is by no means useless”.<sup>26</sup> And so it happily came about that the charity of St. Cyril gathered abundantly the much-desired fruit of peace. And when he could at length discern the first rays of this glorious dawn, and receive in fraternal embrace the Bishops of the Province of Antioch, now resolved to condemn the Nestorian heresy, he exclaimed in the exuberance of his heavenly joy: “‘Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice’. The inner wall of separation has been broken down, the storm which caused such sadness has been stilled, and every occasion of discord has been removed; for Christ, the Saviour of us all, has granted peace to His Churches”.<sup>27</sup>

12. Now, as in those remote times, so also in the present, Venerable Brethren, there is no doubt that a sincere and active benevolence will, with the help and inspiration of God, be a most efficacious aid in promoting that conciliation of dissident sons with the one Church of Christ which all good men are striving to attain. This love of benevolence, in fact, reanimates that mutual familiarity which Our Predecessors strove so earnestly to bring about and to perfect by various means, and particularly by the foundation in this Venerable City of the Pontifical Institute for the promotion of higher Oriental Studies. It is likewise important to hold in due esteem all that constitutes for the oriental

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<sup>24</sup> Ep. 39: *ib.*, 175.

<sup>25</sup> Ep. 33: *ib.*, 161.

<sup>26</sup> Ep. 43: *ib.*, 222-224.

<sup>27</sup> Ep. 39: *ib.*, 174.

peoples their own special patrimony, as it were, handed down to them by their forefathers; and this whether it regards the Sacred Liturgy and the Hierarchical Orders, or the other essentials of the Christian life, provided only that all is in full conformity with genuine religious faith and with the right rules of moral conduct. For a lawful freedom must be allowed to each and every people of Oriental Rite in all those things which derive from their history or depend upon their own peculiar genius and temperament, so long as they are not in contrast with the true and integral doctrine of Jesus Christ. And let all know this and reflect on it, whether they be born in the bosom of the Catholic Church or are hastening towards it on the wings of desire: let them all be persuaded and hold for certain that they will never be compelled to exchange their own legitimate rites and ancient institutions for the latin rites and institutions; both are to be regarded with equal esteem and veneration, for they surround our common mother the Church with, as it were, a regal variety. Nay more, such a diversity of rites and institutions, while conserving intact and inviolable all that is ancient and precious in each confession, does not put the least obstacle in the way of true and genuine unity. More than ever in these our times, when the discords and enmities of war in almost every part of the world have alienated the hearts of men one from another, it is incumbent upon all, moved by Christian charity, to strive ever more earnestly, using every means in their power, to bring about union in Christ and for Christ.

### III

13. Nevertheless the efforts inspired by faith and charity in the task of strengthening this unity in Christ Jesus would be altogether lacking in efficacy if they did not have for their support that immovable rock on which the Church was founded by God: that is to say, the supreme authority of Peter and his Successors. This is clearly proved by the line of conduct adopted by the Patriarch of Alexandria in this most serious controversy. Both in defeating the Nestorian heresy and in reaching agreement with the Bishops of the Province of Antioch, he acted always in the closest possible union with this Apostolic See. When, in fact, this vigilant Prelate perceived that the errors of Nestorius were insinuating themselves and making progress everywhere, to the daily increasing danger of the true faith, he wrote

a letter to Our Predecessor St. Celestine I, in which among other things he says: "Since God requires vigilance of us in these matters, and a long-established custom of the Churches directs that questions such as these be communicated to Your Holiness, I write to you, urged thereto by a clear necessity".<sup>28</sup> To which indeed the Roman Pontiff replies that he embraced Cyril "as though he were present in his letter"; for he seemed to "perceive in him His own identical sentiments in the Lord".<sup>29</sup> Wherefore the Supreme Pontiff delegated to this most orthodox Doctor the authority of the Apostolic See, in virtue of which he was to see to the carrying out of the decrees already pronounced in the Roman Synod against Nestorius. And it is known to all, Venerable Brethren, that at the Council of Ephesus the Patriarch of Alexandria lawfully represented the Roman Pontiff who, in sending his own Legates to the Council, specially recommended them to give their support to the work and authority of St. Cyril. He therefore presided at this Sacred Council in the name of the Bishop of Rome and was the first among all those present to sign its Acts. And so clear and resplendent was the spirit of concord between the Apostolic See and the See of Alexandria that when, in the second session of the Council, the letter of St. Celestine was read publicly, the Fathers exclaimed with one voice: "This is a just judgment. To Celestine, the new Paul, to Cyril, the new Paul, to Celestine, guardian of the faith, to Celestine of one mind with the Council, to Celestine the whole Council gives thanks. One Celestine, one Cyril, one the faith of the Council, one the faith of the whole world".<sup>30</sup> No wonder then if a little later Cyril could write: "Testimony has been borne to the purity of my faith both by the Roman Church and by the holy Synod assembled, I may say, from all the earth which lies under heaven".<sup>31</sup>

14. Furthermore, this most constant union of St. Cyril with the Apostolic See is clearly evident when we consider his method of procedure in securing and consolidating peace with the Bishops of the Province of Antioch. For Our Predecessor St. Celestine, while approving and ratifying all that the Alexandrian Prelate had done in the Council of Ephesus, nevertheless judged it expedient to exclude from this approval the sentence of excommunication which the

<sup>28</sup> Ep. 11: *ib.*, 79.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Ep. ad Cyrillum*: *ib.*, 90.

<sup>30</sup> MANSI, IV, 1287.

<sup>31</sup> *Apol. ad Theodos.*: MIGNE, P. G., LXXXVI, 482.

President of Council, together with the other Fathers, had pronounced against these Bishops. "With regard to these—says the Roman Pontiff—who seem at one with Nestorius in his impiety . . . while We have read your sentence against them, nevertheless We in Our turn lay down what seems opportune. In such questions many circumstances have to be considered, and the Apostolic See always takes account of them. . . . If such a course gives hope of correction, we wish your fraternity to come to an agreement by letter with the Bishop of Antioch. . . . We must trust that through the Divine mercy all will come back to the path of truth".<sup>32</sup> St. Cyril, in obedience to this injunction of the Roman See, began to treat with the Bishops of the Province of Antioch for the re-establishment of peace and concord. Meanwhile St. Celestine passed piously away from this life. It then happened that certain persons declared that His Successor, Sixtus III, was not at all pleased that Nestorius had been deposed from his Bishopric; the Patriarch of Alexandria, however, showed the falsity of such reports by the following words: "He (Sixtus) has written in full harmony with the holy Synod, He has confirmed all its decisions and is at one with us".<sup>33</sup>

15. From all this it is obvious that St. Cyril was in complete harmony with this Apostolic See, and it is equally clear that Our Predecessors considered his acts as their own and honoured him with well-deserved praise. Thus St. Celestine, not content with having expressed to him on countless occasions his confidence and gratitude, writes among other things: "We rejoice in the fact that to the holiness of your life is joined such a great vigilance that you have already surpassed your predecessors, who were themselves always prominent defenders of the dogmas of orthodoxy . . . . You have laid bare all the fallaciēs in (their) most subtle preaching. . . . Your unflinching assertion of our doctrines and the defeats you have inflicted on our adversaries with the aid of the Holy Scriptures have resulted in a great triumph for our faith".<sup>34</sup> And when St. Sixtus III, the successor of Celestine in the Supreme Pontificate, received from the Patriarch of Alexandria the announcement of the conclusion of peace, he wrote to him in the abundance of His joy: "Behold, when We were a prey to anxiety, for it

<sup>32</sup> Ep. 22: MIGNE, P. L., L, 542-543.

<sup>33</sup> Ep. 40: MIGNE, P. G., LXXVII, 202.

<sup>34</sup> Ep. 11, 1-2: MIGNE, P. L., L, 461.

is Our wish that no one should perish, your holiness has made known to Us by your letter that the body of the Church has been made whole. With its members forming once more a single organism, we no longer see anybody wandering abroad in error, for the possession of a common faith testifies to the fact that all have found their place within the structure. . . . To the feet of the blessed Apostle Peter has come a universal brotherhood: behold here an auditorium which befits both the hearers and the things to be heard. . . . To us our brethren have returned, to us, I say, who have attended to the healing of their souls, pursuing with a common zeal the malady from which they languished. . . . Rejoice, beloved Brother, rejoice as a victor, for our brethren are reunited to us. The Church has recovered those whom she sought. And if we desire that none of the little ones should perish, how much greater should be our joy at the recovery of their rulers?"<sup>35</sup> Consoled by these words of Our Predecessor, the Patriarch of Alexandria, indomitable defender of orthodox faith and most zealous promoter of Christian concord, reposed in the peace of Christ.

16. We, Venerable Brethren, in celebrating the fifteenth centenary of this heavenly birth, desire nothing more ardently than that all who are known by the name of Christian should, under the patronage and following the example of St. Cyril, promote with ever-increasing zeal the happy return of our dissenting brethren in the East to Us and to the one Church of Jesus Christ. Let there be for all but the one pure faith; one also that charity which binds us all together in the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ; and, in fine, a common fidelity, active and persevering, to the See of Blessed Peter. Let all apply themselves to this most worthy and deserving work with all their strength, and not only those who live in the East and can thereby draw more easily into the unity of the Church their separated brethren and, more especially, the sacred ministers, through a mutual esteem, kindly intercourse and the example of a faultlessly virtuous life; but likewise all the faithful, begging and imploring God to grant unity to the Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer in every part of the world, praying Him to gather all into the one fold. Above all things We recommend to everyone the powerful help of prayer, which in any enter-

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<sup>35</sup> Ep. 5, 1. 3. 5: *ib.*, 602-604.

prise undertaken for the salvation of souls is necessarily the first aid to be invoked and by far the most efficacious: fervent prayer, addressed to God with confidence and submission to His holy will. Let recourse be had, too, to the most powerful assistance of the Virgin Mother of God, that through the mediation of this most benign and beloved Mother of all, the Holy Spirit may illumine the minds of the Eastern peoples with His divine light, so that we may all be united in the one Church which was founded by Jesus Christ, nourished by the Divine Paraclete Himself with an incessant shower of graces and urged on by Him to sanctity. To those who live in Seminaries or in other Colleges We wish to recommend in a special way the "Dies pro Oriente", as it is called. On that day let more fervent prayers be poured forth to the Divine Pastor of the Universal Church, and let the young be exhorted with greater earnestness to desire the achievement of this most holy unity. And finally let all those who devote themselves to the task of assisting the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, whether they be graced with the dignity of Holy Orders or enrolled in the ranks of Catholic Action or other like Associations, promote with all zeal, by prayer, by writing and by word of mouth, the longed-for union of all the Eastern peoples with the Common Father.

17. May God grant that this paternal and urgent invitation be received with good dispositions by those dissident Bishops also and their flocks who, though separated from Us, yet reverence and honour the Patriarch of Alexandria as their own special glory. Let this most illustrious Doctor be to them a preceptor and model in the new restoration of unity with that triple bond which is so strongly recommended as being absolutely necessary and with which the Divine Founder of the Church wished all His children to be bound together. Let them remember that by the disposition of Divine Providence We today occupy that Apostolic See to which the Alexandrian Bishop, urged by the consciousness of his own responsibility, had recourse, both to defend orthodox faith against the errors of Nestorius by a sure means, and so that the peaceful agreement reached with his dissident brethren might be ratified as by the divine seal. And let them know that We are moved by the same charity as Our Predecessors; and that it is the supreme object of Our prayers and supplications that obstacles of long standing may be happily removed and that the day may at length dawn when the whole flock may be gathered into one fold

in harmonious obedience to Jesus Christ and to His Vicar on earth.

18. We turn in a particular manner to those dissident sons in the East who, while paying the highest honour to St. Cyril, yet do not recognize the authority of the Council of Chalcedon because there the twofold nature in the Person of Christ was solemnly defined. Let them reflect that the teaching of the Patriarch of Alexandria is not opposed to the decrees formulated subsequently in the Council of Chalcedon to meet the rise of new errors. In fact, he writes openly: "not all that the heretics say must be immediately rejected and repudiated: for they hold things which we also assert. ... So it is with Nestorius; though he affirms the two natures, signifying the difference between the humanity and the divinity of the Word: for the nature of the Word is one thing, that of the humanity another; yet he does not profess union with us".<sup>36</sup>

19. It only remains for Us, Venerable Brethren, in celebrating this fifteenth centenary of St. Cyril, to implore the benign patronage of this holy Doctor for the whole church and especially for those in the East who rejoice in the Christian name, asking above all that in our dissident brethren and sons may he happily accomplish that of which he once wrote in the fullness of his joy: "Behold the lacerated members of the body of the Church have once more been brought together and there is no longer any cause of discord which might separate the ministers of the Gospel of Christ".<sup>37</sup>

20. Confidently trusting that this will happily come to pass, we impart to you, Venerable Brethren, one and all, and to the flocks entrusted to your individual care, as a harbinger of celestial gifts and in testimony of Our paternal good-will, Our Apostolic Benediction, with all affection in the Lord.

21. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 9th day of April, Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the year 1944, the sixth of Our Pontificate.

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<sup>36</sup> Ep. 44: MIGNE, P. G., LXXVII, 226.

<sup>37</sup> Ep. 49: *ib.*, 254.