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The Lay Apostolate
ADU 5906

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THE LAY APOSTOLATE

According to the Mind of

POPE ST. PIUS X



INSTAURARE OMNIA IN CHRISTO

by

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On the cover are shown the papal coat of arms of St. Pius X and his motto, which signifies "To restore all things in Christ."

CCD-146

Order from:

CONFRATERNITY PUBLICATIONS

508 Marshall St., Paterson, N. J.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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According to the Mind of

POPE ST. PIUS X

The canonization of St. Pius X has proposed to the Catholic world for veneration and imitation the modern promoter and celestial patron of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. It has presented him as a very great Saint and as one of the greatest Pastors of the Universal Church since St. Peter, to whose office as Supreme Pastor he succeeded in our own time.

The task of a pastor of the Catholic Church is threefold: to teach, to govern and to sanctify — duties corresponding to the prophetic, kingly and priestly offices of Christ. The catechism itself gives emphasis to these three duties by its threefold division of the Creed, the Commandments and the Sacraments; of Doctrine, Law and Means of Grace. In all these aspects of the pastoral office St. Pius X is in the very first rank.

1. SANCTIFICATION OF THE FAITHFUL

Pius X opened the floodgates of grace to every parish and mission in the Universal Church and thereby touches the life of every Catholic child and adult not once but continuously throughout their lives. By his decree of early Communion he brought our Lord close to every child in his earliest years that He might preserve the innocence of childhood into adult life. By his decree of Frequent Communion he brought the nourishment of the Holy Eucharist into the daily lives of all Catholics. Where fifty years ago devout Catholics were accustomed to receiving Holy Communion a few times a year, today, thanks to St. Pius X, millions of Catholics are united to Christ in monthly, weekly or daily Communion. The work of sanctification inaugurated by St. Pius X, which began with the announcement of his purpose "to restore all things in Christ," was followed by his epochal declaration that the indispensable source of the true Christian spirit would be found in participa-

tion by the faithful in the Mass and the public prayers of the Church. From this has come the profound liturgical movement which has vivified the family of God and has renewed the Mystical Body of Christ in all its members. The efforts of St. Pius X to sanctify the flock committed to his care will continue to bear fruit for all future Christian centuries.

2. CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

St. Pius X knew that ignorance of law was a source of indiscipline. As a pastor he realized that the laws of the Catholic Church promulgated in different centuries and under the most diverse conditions were not readily knowable by either priests or people. To govern the Universal Church effectively it was necessary that the law should be made knowable and known. To this end St. Pius X ordered the codification of Canon Law and within his own lifetime witnessed the practical completion of this work.

Our present Holy Father on the occasion of the canonization of St. Pius X selected the codification of Canon Law for special mention as immortalizing the name of the Holy Pontiff. By bringing the entire law of the Catholic Church within 2,500 short paragraphs and within the covers of a single volume he made the law of the Church clear and explicit and available to all.

The Code of Pius X sets forth the laws for dioceses and parishes and religious communities; the obligations of bishops, priests and people. The law being known is enforceable; the result is that the discipline of the Catholic Church is probably better in our time than at any period since the Church emerged from the catacombs. And where the discipline is not yet entirely praiseworthy the foundation has been laid for the discipline of the true City of God.

3. THE TEACHING APOSTOLATE

The third duty of the pastor is to teach. This work must be understood under two aspects. First, the authoritative and definitive protection of the integrity of doctrine committed by

Christ to His Church and guarded during the centuries by the infallible authority of the Church's Magisterium. This aspect was authoritatively expounded by our Holy Father Pius XII in his allocution to the Cardinals and Bishops assembled in the Vatican on May 31, 1954. This supreme teaching office is committed to the Pope and to the Bishops and to them alone; to the Popes as the successors of St. Peter and to the Bishops as the successors of the Apostolic College.

Pius X was confronted early in his Pontificate with one of the most subtle attacks on the integrity of Christian Doctrine ever launched in the period of Christianity, namely, the error of Modernism, which under the specious appearance of reconciling science and faith actually sacrificed the faith in every respect. The Encyclical *Pascendi* of St. Pius X in 1907 stripped this error of its deceptive garb and revealed it to the Catholic world as a synthesis of all heresies. He removed the danger from the Catholic Church. The exercise of the supreme teaching authority of the Church in the confrontation of Modernism by St. Pius X has placed him among the greatest defenders of the integrity of Christian Doctrine.

But there is a second aspect to the teaching office of the Church which intervenes after the integrity of doctrine has been safeguarded, namely, the *diffusion* of a knowledge of this faith among men. In this regard Pius X stands in the forefront of the successors of the Apostles. In his Encyclical Letter *Acerbo nimis* in 1905 he summoned the Bishops of the world to stand by him in the exercise of his sovereign authority to see that a knowledge of the Gospel of Christ was spread abroad among all Christians. He made it clear that this task, so important and so universally essential, demanded that the Bishops and priests should call to their aid thousands of Catholic laymen and women to render this service.

APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY

It would be useful here to quote two brief paragraphs from the allocution of Pope Pius XII to the Cardinals and Bishops

on the occasion of the canonization of Pius X. Our Holy Father said on that occasion:

As far as the laity is concerned, it is clear that both men and women can be invited or admitted as helpers in the defense of the faith. *It is enough to call to mind the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, in which so many thousands of men and women are working, as well as the other branches of the apostolate of the laity. All of these are highly praiseworthy and can and should be promoted in every way.* But all of these lay people must be and must stay under the authority, the leadership, and the vigilance of those who have been established by divine institution as teachers within the Church of Christ. In matters pertaining to the salvation of souls there is no teaching activity in the Church exempt from that authority and vigilance.*

THE CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

In his Letter *Acerbo nimis*, St. Pius X pictures the vast field for the diffusion of Christian Doctrine and orders the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine to be established in every parish in the world to aid the pastors in this pastoral task.

The Letter of Pope Pius X outlined a program for the religious instruction not merely of children but of youth and adults as well. It was, however, not in language of mere legal compulsion that Pius X addressed himself to the question of religious instruction in this Encyclical. For this letter burns with zeal for the spread of the knowledge of Christ's message. It carries the voice of a devoted Supreme Shepherd seeking out the members of the flock who wander from the path of salvation. It examines with holy fervor the sources of danger to the sheep committed to his care. It studies with pastoral solicitude and extols with wisdom and eloquence the office of the catechist. It sums up with apostolic authority the measures which

*Translation from *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXXXI (Washington, D. C.), 196.

are to be taken for bringing back safely to the fold those in danger through lack of religious instruction:

In each parish, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine is to be canonically instituted.

St. Pius X, who opened the treasure of the Eucharist to the little ones, knew of the neglected children who might learn in the school of the modern world about everything except God. He knew of the youth in the workshop and in secular schools and colleges whose hearts were led astray from Jesus Christ by example and by pernicious propaganda. He was also on fire for the reconquest of the souls of "adults and those tottering with age who knew nothing of the principal mysteries of faith, who, on hearing the name of Christ, can only ask 'Who is He that I may believe in Him?'"

PREVAILING IGNORANCE OF DIVINE THINGS

In view of this painful spectacle the Sovereign Pontiff asked: Now, if it is vain to expect a harvest where no seed has been sown, how can we hope to have better living generations if they be not instructed in time in the doctrine of Jesus Christ?

The Holy Father declared, addressing himself to the Bishops of the world:

To us, Venerable Brethren, it seems that while other reasons may play their part, we must agree with those who hold that the main cause of the present indifference and torpor, as well as the very serious evils that flow from it, is to be found in the prevailing ignorance of Divine things.

In seeking a remedy for this ignorance, Pope Pius X pressed into service the Parish Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and closed his Letter with a call to battle in the words of Moses: "Whoever is for the LORD, let him come to me!" (Exodus 32:26).

The ringing challenge of Pope Pius X for a crusade against religious ignorance under the banner of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine has been re-echoed, and his command reinforced by his successors. Pius XI in 1923 instituted the Catechetical Office in the Sacred Congregation of the Council, and that Sacred Congregation issued on January 12, 1935, the famous decree *Provido sane consilio — On the Better Care and Promotion of Catechetical Instruction*. This document has become the charter for the further development of the Confraternity.

Finally, the reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, in his Encyclical Letter *Sertum laetitiae — To the Hierarchy of the United States* (1939) refers to the Confraternity as a spiritual agency "rich in achievement, richer still in promise."

Pope Pius XI gave the final definition of Catholic Action. "Catholic Action," he said (and he felt he was not without the aid of the Holy Spirit in formulating the definition), "is the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy."

We have already seen that the apostolate of the hierarchy is to teach, to govern and to sanctify. With the definition furnished by Pius XI we can easily see the structure of the lay apostolate of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in the mind of Pope St. Pius X.

The Confraternity has the *parish* as the field of its activity. In every parish, said Pius X, "let the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine be established." Canon 711 of the Code authoritatively reinforces this prescription.

THE CLERGY DIRECTING AND ENCOURAGING

The parish priest or one appointed by him is the *spiritual director* of the Parish Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Pius X says:

Catholic Action is proper to the laity and not the clergy, who have, however, the duty of directing, watching over and encouraging it.*

*Quoted in "Catholic Action — Lay Apostolate," by Joseph V. Sommers, S. J., in *A Symposium on the Life and Work of Pius X* (Paterson, N. J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1946), p. 131.

The Confraternity is a *congregation* or an *association of the laity*. Again, St. Pius says:

What is most necessary is to have in each parish a group of laymen at the same time virtuous, well-instructed, determined and really apostolic.

This is an admirable description of the parish board of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, without which there is no canonically erected Confraternity of Christian Doctrine *functioning* in the parish. This is the group which accepts responsibility and under the guidance of the pastor enrolls the members in the various fields of Confraternity activity. Since Pius X speaks of a group of laymen, it is obvious that men should have at least as large a representation on the parish executive board as women. The call of the laity to this apostolate is inherent in their reception of the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

ATMOSPHERE, SOUL, WORK, OF THE CCD

The *atmosphere* of the Confraternity in the parish must be one of knowledge of and reverence for the law of the Church. St. Pius X, by codifying Canon Law, has made it possible for intelligent Catholics to know the law of the Church and to be apostles of its reverent observance. "Instructed Catholics" desiderated by St. Pius X in the parish must go beyond the mere memorization of the duties prescribed in the Catechism under the headings of the Commandments and the Precepts. Members of the parish board of the Confraternity must have a deep reverence for the laws of the Church and for pastoral authority.

The *soul* of the Confraternity is the Eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament. St. Pius X has given the motivation for his lay apostles. The indispensable source of the true Christian spirit ("the fount of all holiness"*) is the participation of the faithful in the public worship of the Church. When we combine this Eucharistic thought with the doctrine of the Mystical

*Secret of the Mass for the Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola.

Body, we are able to understand the sublime liturgical teaching of our Holy Father Pius XII. This is the spirit, the soul and source of the apostolate of the Confraternity. Those who would deprecate the Confraternity as being concerned with the childish memorization of jejune catechetical formulas have little understanding of the profound design of the lay apostolate in the mind of Pope St. Pius X.

The *work* of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine is indeed the catechetical apostolate drawing inspiration from Sacred Scripture and the Catechism, those joint founts of Catholic Faith, the Bible and Sacred Tradition. A highly qualified scholar has remarked that "the Acta of Pius X in the matter of the Scripture are more numerous than those of any other Pontiff. In importance and lasting influence, they outweigh those of almost any other Pope. It is not saying too much to hold that the history of ecclesiastical legislation and guidance in this field in recent years revolves about Pius X."*

It is no accident that the Confraternity Committee with the urgent encouragement of the Holy See has concerned itself with the authorized revision of the Catechism, and the translation of the Bible from the original languages.

Parish priests who are imbued with the message of St. Pius X in his *Exhortation to the Clergy* will have no difficulty in assuming with confidence the duty of "*directing, watching over and encouraging*" the lay apostolate of St. Pius X functioning through the parish board of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

The *guiding star* of the parish Confraternity, giving hope and sense of direction in times of difficulty and discouragement, and calmness both in distress and in success, is Our Lady, whose emblem, the Star of the Sea, was emblazoned on both the Episcopal and the Papal Coat of Arms of St. Pius X.

The Saint sought her maternal guidance in his labors as Pope of the Catechism, the Bible, the sacred liturgy, the Code

*William L. Newton, S. S. D., "Sacred Scripture," in *A Symposium on the Life and Work of Pope Pius X*, pp. 69-70.

of Christian discipline, and the lay apostolate. May Our Lady watch over and prosper the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, which enshrines the pastoral spirit of Pope St. Pius X, and to which he has committed his practical program "to restore all things in Christ."

THE MANUAL OF THE PARISH CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

sets forth the program of the Parish Confraternity in detail; the following points summarize the program:

- a. Religious education of elementary school children not attending Catholic schools, in vacation school, school year instruction classes, and correspondence courses;
 - b. Religious instruction of Catholic youth of high school age not attending Catholic schools, in suitable discussion clubs and by other successful methods;
 - c. Religious discussion clubs for adult groups (including students attending secular colleges and universities, and out-of-school youth);
 - d. Religious education of children by parents in the home (Parent-Educator program);
 - e. Instruction of non-Catholics in the teachings of the Catholic faith (Apostolate of Good Will).
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PROMOTE LAY TRAINING COURSES

There is a vast reservoir of lay apostolic spirit in city and country which only needs invitation and training. Invitation is not enough. There must also be training.

The Confraternity program requires specific training for the laity participating. A successful Confraternity program can be predicated only on a trained laity. Most failures have been due to the neglect of this factor. The increasing call for lay training institutes makes necessary the preparation of leaders for this work in every section of the country.

To promote practically Confraternity Lay Training Courses a standard pattern is followed by each instructor in order

1. to present a workable activity plan adaptable to needs of the parish;
2. to co-ordinate the activities of CCD workers in a parish;
3. to avoid conflicting statements by instructors and duplication of effort within the several training courses;
4. to give members of the group exact information and some experience in putting it to work.

AVAILABLE NOW

A Preparatory Course for CCD Parish Executive Board Members (No. 1C-2) is planned to acquaint each prospective board member with the general work of the CCD. It is neither a substitute for regular meetings of the Parish Executive Board nor a preparatory course in any one of the specific activity sections of the CCD. 10c

A Suggested Course for Confraternity Fishers of Men (No. 1C-4C) is adaptable to an enrollment of beginners as well as persons of varying degrees of experience. For some, it may be an introduction; for others, a refresher course. 10c

Suggested Preparatory Courses for Confraternity Helpers (No. 1C-4D). A preparatory course for Helpers on a parish, deanery or diocesan basis. Usually six meetings of one and one-half hours are held once a week or oftener. 5c

A Suggested Preparatory Course for Religious Discussion Club Leaders (No. 1C-5) is adaptable to an enrollment of beginners as well as persons of varying degrees of discussion club experience. 10c

A Preparatory Course for CCD Parent-Educators (No. 1C-5D) provides fathers and mothers with aids for creating a religious atmosphere in the home and teaching religion to their children from birth through high school; suggests a plan for a Family Book Shelf in the home or the parish, and formation of Parent-Educator Discussion Clubs. 10c

An Introductory Course for Confraternity Teachers (No. 1C-4B) presents a special approach to CCD classes, explains CCD courses and methods, encourages prospective teachers to take a more comprehensive course. 10c