

JOINT PASTORAL LETTER

The Archbishop of Port of Spain and the Right Reverend Bishops and Ordinaries of Roseau, Jamaica, British Guiana and British Honduras
to the
Clergy and Laity of the British Caribbean area.

Greeting and ever-increasing solidarity in the Catholic Faith.

We have gathered together in Jamaica to discuss matters affecting the Church in this area and to plan to make the work of the Church more effective for the future. On such an occasion as this it is fitting that we should join in greeting you with pastoral solicitude.

We praise you for the devotedness you have shown to Our Holy Mother the Church and for all you have done to advance it; but in these days when the powers of evil are so active we exhort you to even greater devotion to the cause of Christ. We exhort you also to even greater loyalty to, and closer union with, ourselves who have been placed by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church amongst you.

This loyalty is expected from all Catholics in still greater measure towards our Holy Father the Pope, who carries 'the solicitude of all the Churches'. His Holiness needs all the support we can give him and we can do this most effectively by our prayers and by our complete obedience. We can help him, too, by your material contributions to meet the enormous demands which are being made upon his charity at the present time.

Naturally our first thought was to express to His Holiness your loyalty and devotion and our own, and to beg his blessing for us all. In reply we received a gracious message.

THE PRIVILEGE OF BELONGING TO THE CHURCH

We have spoken of loyalty to the Church, and this loyalty will become all the stronger the more you realise just what the Church is, and how great a grace and privilege it is to be a Catholic.

In order to redeem mankind, God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, took our human nature and came on earth. He brought mankind the true message of God's revelation and He laid down His life in agony on the Cross for man's redemption.

The Catholic Church is the means chosen by Christ to continue His work of teaching men Divine Truth and it is through the Church and Her Sacraments that Christ continues to bestow the grace He won for us by His death on the Cross. We know that according to Christ's promise the Church will abide on earth even to the end of the world, animated by the Holy Spirit and assuring salvation to those who live as worthy members.

By Baptism each one of us has been made a member of the body of which Christ is the head. We have become sharers in the Divine Life drawing it from Christ Himself. By Confirmation we have had the Sacramental Life increased within our souls and our responsibility has been increased to push forward the frontiers of Christ's Kingdom. In Holy Communion Christ Himself has come to us and through this we have been helped to become more united with Him in thought, in will and in action.

These are some of the privileges which belong to us as members of the Church set up by Christ, and in these days when many, so mistakenly, regard any one religion as being just as good as another, we exhort you to react vigorously against this error and to remember always that the only true Church is that to which you, by the grace of God belong.

This belief and conviction will spur you on to defend the interests of the Church and to advance the Kingdom of Christ both through individual effort, as occasion offers, and through Catholic Action.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE FAITH

But in order to be fully conscious of the treasures of your Faith, you must know as much as you can about it. You must be ready to hear instructions about the Faith and to read about it and, when opportunity offers, study groups may be formed to help to a better understanding of its treasures. Only through adequate knowledge will you be able to give an account of the Faith that is in you and sound knowledge is

necessary if you are to explain and defend the doctrines of the Church and to advance the reign of Christ.

The foundations of religious knowledge must be laid from early years and it is the solemn duty of Catholic parents to ensure that their children are properly instructed in their Faith. Throughout, much must depend on the religious training given by the parents themselves, and nothing can replace the influence of a good Catholic home.

Our Catholic Schools have been founded at the cost of great sacrifice to help parents to give their children a good Catholic education. Parents are under a grave obligation to send their children to Catholic schools where this is possible and the law of the Church insists that they may not send their children to non-Catholic Schools without permission from the Bishop or his representative.

This duty of educating your children as Catholics brings with it a right to have your Catholic Schools and it is your bounden duty to insist upon the preservation of this right.

When children cannot be sent to Catholic Schools, parents have the most serious obligation of ensuring the proper Catholic instruction of their children and they must be specially watchful that nothing offensive to the conscience of a Catholic is forced upon their children.

In these days when the State is endeavouring to claim complete control of education, we wish to make it quite clear that no Catholic can ever admit such a claim.

The Church has been given a special mandate and right by Christ to share in His own work of teaching mankind. Parents have the right, as well as the duty, to educate the children given them by God. These rights of the Church and of the parents must, therefore, be respected by the State.

We owe a great debt to our Catholic teachers, religious and lay, and we call for new recruits to this glorious and meritorious profession.

The Catholic teacher has a double privilege and responsibility. He stands "in loco parentum" - in the place of the parents - taking the place of the parents for the time

the children are under his charge. He is, besides, called upon to assist the Church in training the young in religion and morals.

We need hardly add that every teacher has a special responsibility to refrain from anything that can injure the children's faith and morals.

LOCAL VOCATIONS

Parents who, very properly, cherish high ambitions for their offspring and who are prepared to make every sacrifice that their children may do nobly in life should not forget that foremost in the noble service of God - for which we are all created - comes His exclusive service in the priesthood and the religious life. The Christian family is the surest nursery of a vocation to this special service of God and parents discerning the bud of such a vocation in their children should be proud of this grace and should nurture it and not destroy it. To act otherwise would be to give the lie to our oft repeated prayer: "Thy Kingdom come."

According to the mind of Christ in His Church, His Kingdom can never be firmly established until its service in every grade is provided by clergy of the flesh and blood of the people to whom they minister, who have a natural understanding of, and sympathy with, their own.

It is essential that there be a great increase in local vocations in our territories. To foster such vocations Seminaries have been established in Trinidad and in Jamaica and it is hoped that others may be founded soon.

But the great increase of local vocations for which we long can only come through earnest prayer. We ask you all to join with us in begging God to grant the favour of a vocation, and the grace bravely to follow it, to suitable candidates among our Catholic boys and girls. We ask Catholic parents especially to pray that God may grant the great favour of a vocation to their families.

The training of a local priesthood and the foundation of seminaries calls for new expenditure and we ask of you to contribute generously to this great purpose.

EMIGRATION

Many Catholics from these territories have been among those who have migrated to the United Kingdom and we have been grieved to learn that a number of these Catholics have fallen away from the practice of their Faith when they arrived in their

new and unusual surroundings. This would not have happened if they had treasured their Faith as they should and if they had been trained to a more virile practice of their Faith, independent of the help of their own home surroundings.

A number of Catholic Organisations in the United Kingdom, such as the Young Christian Workers, are ready to give immigrants all the help they can. Before leaving for abroad all those who intend to emigrate should ask their priests about such organisations. It is important too, that Catholics should avoid settling in places where no Catholic Church is available. On arrival at their destination they should introduce themselves to the local clergy and these will be able to put them in touch with the various local Catholic Societies etc.

CHRISTIAN MODESTY

God in His goodness has allowed mankind to share in His own creative powers. This great privilege calls for the greatest reverence and respect for the things of sex.

We deplore the present-day degradation of womanhood and the flaunting of the human body in advertisements and in 'Beauty Contests.' Commercial exploitation of sex tends to inflame the passions and provokes to sin and it must be held responsible for much present-day moral evil.

We deplore too, the lowering of moral standards in many of the films shown in cinemas.

We call upon our people to give to sex the reverence which is its due and to boycott everything that is offensive to Christian Modesty. We also counsel you carefully to note the ratings of the Legion of Decency where these are available, before deciding to go to any film.

SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

We cannot but be greatly distressed at the sad economic conditions which prevail in so many places within our jurisdiction. Lack of the means of life does not only lead to human distress. It opens the way, too, to irreligion and immorality, and we wish to see every possible effort made to improve living conditions. We wish to commend in a special way the work that has been done by priests and members of the Faithful to advance the Co-operative Movement and we hope to see this work spread.

But there can be no complete betterment till the principles of social justice are properly understood and universally applied. These principles have been clearly set forth for us in the great Encyclicals of the Popes and Catholics must be far more earnest in making use of this rich heritage. This calls first of all for study, and study groups can profitably be formed for this purpose. But study is not enough. The principles must be put into practice, and Catholics who are well grounded in the principles of social justice and who follow out those principles in practice will by the force of their arguments, and by their inspiration and example, help to hasten the coming of a new era of social justice throughout our territories.

THE FUTURE

We are on the eve of important political developments and, as time goes on, more and more political responsibility will be given to the people of the Caribbean.

We call upon Catholics in the area to have a keen sense of their own responsibilities. Take your full share in public and political affairs; use your votes conscientiously, carefully evaluating the candidate for office and try to obtain the best knowledge you can of the issues at stake.

If Catholics know their principles and apply them to their political life, they will be able to make a very valuable contribution to the well-being of their countries and will do much to promote justice, social well-being, and the happiness of all. Above all, they will ensure that the political developments that are to come will be in accordance with the Law of God and such as will be for His Glory.

BLESSING

May God bless you all and give you an ever-greater realisation of the treasure of your Faith. May you ever remain steadfast in the practice of your religion and may you be ever more eager to advance the reign of Christ.

Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I.

Feast of the Commemoration of the Baptism of Our Lord, 13 January 1956.

- +Most Rev. FINBAR RYAN, O.P., D.D. - Archbishop of Port-of-Spain
- +Rt. Rev. DAVID JOSEPH HICKEY, S.J., D.D. - Vicar Apostolic of Belize
- +Rt. Rev. JOHN JOSEPH McELENEY, S.J., D.D. - Vicar Apostolic of Jamaica
- +Rt. Rev. RICHARD LESTER GUILLY, S.J., D.D., O.B.E. - Vicar Apostolic of British Guiana & Barbados
- Very Rev. JOSEPH DUERLOO, C.SS.R. - Vicar General of the Diocese of Roseau representing the Rt. Rev. JAMES MORIS, C.Ss.R., D.D.



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