

PASTORAL LETTER ON VIGILANCE AGAINST CONTEMPORARY ERRORS CONCERNING THE MYSTERIES OF THE INCARNATION AND THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Rufino J. Cardinal Santos
Archbishop of Manila

**To Their Excellencies, Our Auxiliary-Bishops and Vicar General,
Our Archdiocesan Senate of Priests and Pastoral Council
Our Vicars-Forane and Parish Priests and their
Assistants,
The Religious Congregations and Secular Institutes
The Officers and Members of the Apostolate of the Laity
(ALAM), and
The Faithful in the Archdiocese of Manila**

GREETINGS AND PEACE!

We address this Pastoral Letter to you impelled by the solicitude proper of Our Office for the purity and integrity of the Deposit of the Faith, which is foremost among the sacred obligations of bishops under the guidance of the Pope, the Supreme Pastor. As Vatican II has it, only by "holding fast to this deposit the entire people united with their bishops remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers". (Dei Verbum, 10)

ERRORS AGAINST THE FAITH

Our 20th century is witnessing the unfortunate revival of the Arian error about Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of many others that follow upon the heels of this capital error. Among the latter we wish to single out those that concern the Divine Persons of the Father and the Holy Spirit, errors that enveigh against the very nature of the Godhead and the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

(This PASTORAL LETTER was publicly read by His Eminence, Rufino J. Cardinal Santos, Archbishop of Manila, at the Pontifical High Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral, Intramuros, Manila, on June 30, 1972, on the occasion of POPE'S DAY.)

This revival is called by some neo-Arianism and by others, perhaps with more accuracy, neo-Modernism. Not without irony, these errors have reappeared after sixteen centuries, during which the pronouncements of Ecumenical Councils and a universally accepted Liturgy had exorcised them from the Church. The irony is sharpened by the fact that these errors are spreading at a time when the bishops of the whole world, gathered solemnly in the Second Vatican Council together with the Holy Father as their Head, had reaffirmed the profession of the Faith in its integral wholeness and had left it inscribed on each and every page of the Council's Decrees and Constitutions.

GRAVITY OF THE CONTEMPORARY ERRORS

The central error of this neo-Modernism — let us call it by this name — lies in that it denies that Jesus Christ is God, the Only-Begotten Son of God, and truly a Divine Person. The Partisans of this revived error indeed attribute to Our Blessed Lord and Master Jesus Christ all conceivable human perfections. They profess that Christ is the man sent by God to redeem men, and that Christ fulfilled this mission by His life and His death upon the cross. Nonetheless, they deny the eternal pre-existence of Jesus and His Divine Sonship. Thereby, notwithstanding the accumulation of all conceivable human perfections in Him, these Neo-Modernists acknowledge Christ to be nothing more than a mere man and a son of God only by adoption just as we all are.

Now, the Divinity of Jesus Christ is the ground upon which the whole of Christian revelation rests. Therefore, to deny that Christ is truly a Divine Person is to eliminate the very foundation of our Christian mysteries. It is enough to recite the Apostles' Creed or the Symbol of the Mass to grow aware that to deny that Christ is truly God and equal in nature to the Father is to deny in the same breath the existence in God of the Person of the Father, and likewise to deny the Person of the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from both the Father and the Son. This neo-Modernism, therefore, eliminates from our religion the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, and the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.

The negation of the other mysteries of our faith flows logically from these fundamental errors. The redeeming values of Our Blessed Lord's Life and Passion is rooted in the fact

that the Lord Jesus is truly a Divine Person. This fact endows all His acts — even the most minimal — with an infinite worth. This is the reason why the merits of Christ were — and are — sufficient to redeem all men from all their sins. But if Christ is not truly God, as these neo-Modernists pretend, His Life and Passion could neither have infinite value nor could they ever suffice to redeem one man even one single sin, because no matter how small we suppose the sin to be, it will always remain an offense to the infinite God.

It is thus clear that this fundamental neo-Modernist error entails the complete denial of the whole mystery of our Redemption from the Incarnation of Our Lord up to His Ascension and sitting at the right hand of God, co-equal in glory with His Father.

This basic error further implies the denial that Jesus Christ could ever have the power to send from above the Person of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles; nay, the very existence of the Holy Spirit as a Divine Person proceeding from both the Father and the Son is negated.

Consequently, all the fundamental dogmas of our Creed are eliminated.

TOTAL EXCLUSION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND OF THE SACRAMENTS

St. Paul declares: "He who is just lives by faith." (Rom. 1:17). The denial of the Blessed Trinity and of the Incarnation of the Word of God subverts at its base the whole edifice of the Christian life since the latter consists of faith and the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and lives and works through charity. We receive this life of faith and grace by way of the sacraments, while prayer and worship nurture it to perfection. It is implanted in us in Baptism, which purifies us from sin and inserts us into Christ; in Penance it is restored by the forgiveness of our actual sins; in the Eucharist it is nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ the Only-Begotten of God. And so on till the day of our bodily resurrection.

The neo-Modernist error negates the Most Holy Trinity in Whose name we are baptised and from Whose power all the sacraments draw their efficaciousness. It inevitably follows that there is neither validity in our baptism, nor truth in the forgiveness

of sins, nor Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist, nor any worth in our Liturgy and prayer. Hence the whole of Catholic cult is deprived of all meaning and worth, not only where it concerns the Mass and the sacraments, but also where it concerns the worship due to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the veneration owed to the Holy Virgin as the Mother of God and to the Saints as our elder brethren who from the glory of heaven are capable of helping us only because of the infinite merits of Christ, "the first born among many brethren." (Rom. 8, 29).

THE GRIEVOUS DUTY OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

All the preceding is but the briefest summary of the lethal effects and consequences that logically follow from the Arian error being spread in these days of theological neo-Modernism. Upon us all weighs the obligation to defend and preserve the treasure of our faith in all its purity and integrity. We, therefore, expect that our priests and the religious in our Archdiocese, both men and women, will get themselves efficaciously involved in teaching our Catholic Faith purely and integrally. Upon it depends both the faithful discharge of our mission within the Church and, above all, the salvation of the souls of men.

As we exhort our priests and our religious men and women zealously to preserve pure and integral the Faith, We also wish to caution them not only against the tendency to introduce doubts and uncertainties, but also against propensity to employ equivocal or ambiguous expressions in matters of faith where by her definition Holy Mother Church has fixed the authentic meaning of our dogmas together with the formulae whereby that meaning is expressed. No less than the Holy Father himself has sounded the alert against the danger involved in this practice, the effects of which are corrosive and readily sow doubt in the people of God. Said the Holy Father in his Exhortation to the Bishops, mincing no words: "At this very moment many of the faithful are troubled in their faith by an accumulation of ambiguities, uncertainties and doubts about its essentials. Such are the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas the mystery of the Eucharist and the Real Presence, the Church as the institution of salvation, the priestly ministry in the minds of the people of God, the value of prayer and the sacraments, and the moral requirements concerning, for instance, the indissolubility of marriage or respect for life. Even the divine

authority of the Scripture is not left unquestioned by a radical demythologization." (Cf. A.A.S. 1971, pg. 99).

For, indeed, faith — if it be a true faith — receives the revealed deposit as the very word of God. Hence, faith is as certain and as infallible as God Himself. Wherefore, the slightest doubt, uncertainty, ambiguity, destroys the infallible certainty of faith and thus kills faith itself.

The vital importance of the subject We have sketched above places upon all priests engaged in the ministry of preaching, and upon all religious and lay men and women engaged in religious education, especially catechist, the bounden duty of being alert to, and of keeping themselves free from, these errors of our times. Obviously, a much graver obligation weighs upon the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff.

In pursuance of this obligation, the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has issued the *Declaration* which We herewith offer to the priests and religious men and women in our Archdiocese. This *Declaration* specifies in concise terms the aforementioned errors and indicates the dogmatic conciliar from which we must all receive the doctrine concerning these mysteries together with the genuine sense in which the Church has always held them. The *Declaration* admirably embodies the sense of the Church, and the Holy Father has of course ordered its publication.

Nothing less than the most unfathomable mysteries of God is at stake here: the intimate life of God in the Trinity of Persons, the Divine Sonship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the infinite worth of His revelation and salvific work. All of this superexceeds human understanding. Faith alone enables us to enter into, and participate in, these mysterious realities by humbly believing and confessing them. Hence, We exhort each and every one cordially to receive this priceless *Declaration* and to confirm to it our preaching, teaching, and Catechism.

Trustfully We call on our Vicars General, our parish priests and clergy, and the religious Superiors in our Archdiocese to aid Our solicitude for the integrity and purity of the Faith with their zeal and vigilance in so vital a matter.

Given in the City of Manila, Philippines, on the 30th day of June 1972, in commemoration of the 9th anniversary of the Coronation of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI.