



The Holy See

*LETTERA DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO XII AL CLERO INDIANO**

During recent years We have been following with special interest the outcome of the efforts which you, Venerable Brethren, have been making to promote and foster Catholic Action, in your respective dioceses in India. That these efforts have achieved a large measure of success is abundantly evident from the fact that, in 1945, you deemed it opportune to found, under your authoritative direction, the Committee of Catholic Action whereby Catholic Action was formally established on a national basis in India. We welcomed therefore, with particular gratification, the letter which, as National Director, the Archbishop of Madras, mindful of Our Apostolic office and of Our paternal interest in such matters, recently communicated to Us; and gladly acceding to the filial request therein contained, We have deemed it good to share your joy and prosper your undertaking by addressing you on the subject of Catholic Action.

Your beloved country has reached a turning-point in its history : a new era has dawned : the flaming torch of liberty with justice has warmed the hearts and fired the minds of your beloved people and, in the burning fervour of newly-won national independence, the destiny of your great nation is being shaped. At this juncture in your history, when problems of national importance have to be faced and solved, it is of great consequence that the faithful committed to your care should be in a position to make a worthwhile contribution to the future of your nation, by sharing with their brothers in blood that heritage of sound doctrine which as Catholics they possess and cherish.

Catholic Action, wherein the first and essential duty of personal sanctification is combined with an intense apostolic activity under the mandate and encouragement of the hierarchy, provides an excellent means whereby the faithful, intensifying their own spiritual life and deepening their religious convictions, may confer on the nation those blessings which accrue to civil society from the due observance of the divine law and the zealous fulfilment of christian duties. This high purpose has been aptly stated in these words of Our Predecessor of blessed memory: « It is the function of this type of Action to form, as it were, a great army of good citizens, men and women, and especially young people of both sexes, whose first and dearest desire is to take some part in

the sacred ministry of the Church, and to strive valiantly under her leadership and guidance to spread the Kingdom of Christ in private and public life » (Letter to the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, November 6th, 1929), the promotion of which is the acquisition for human society of the highest of all goods.

Wherefore We rejoice with you, Venerable Brethren, that under your pastoral direction and encouragement, this active and militant form of Catholic life is being firmly established in your dioceses, and it is Our fervent prayer that all those who enrol in its apostolate, so necessary in these days, « may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing: being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God » (*Col. 1, 10*).

Having as its aim and purpose the promotion of the Kingdom of Christ it is obvious that Catholic Action transcends the aims of political parties and provides an apostolate whereby Catholics, without distinction of age, or sex, or class, or party, may promote whatever pertains to religion and morality. In so far as such activity is a direct collaboration of the laity in the spiritual and pastoral work of the Church, clearly it must be subordinated to the authority of the Bishops whom, under the jurisdiction of the Vicar of Christ, « the Holy Ghost hath placed to rule the Church of God » (*Act. 20, 28*), in their respective dioceses. In its social aspects also, where it may exert an impact on civil society, this sharing of the laity in the apostolic work of the Church must likewise be guided and directed by the Hierarchy, which is, for Catholics, the competent authority regarding the moral implications of questions arising in the social-economic order. For these reasons, Venerable Brethren, it is most opportune that one of the sections of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India should be charged with the direction of the All India Catholic Action Organization. This « Committee of Catholic Action », under its episcopal director, will be an effective means to coordinate the various Catholic Action groups, to acquaint them with the mind of the Church and ensure that in serried ranks they act in close cooperation with you in the matters of national interest requiring definite Catholic leadership and a precise statement of Catholic thought and teaching. Moreover it will be in a position to facilitate and encourage a cordial collaboration between Catholic Action groups and the existing associations, whose labours, whether in the field of personal sanctification or social service, deserve so well of the whole Church, so that, though retaining their autonomy, all may yet rejoice in the blessed bond of fraternal solidarity, which, according to the mind of Our Predecessor of happy memory, should unite all who dedicate themselves, each in his own measure, to the up—building of the Body of Christ (*Eph. 4, 12*).

The guiding principle therefore of all those who collaborate in this apostolate should be « sentire cum Ecclesia », to have the mind of the Church, to be intimately acquainted with the doctrine of the Church which is « the pillar and the ground of truth » (*1 Tim. 3, 15*). Wherefore We commend to you, Venerable Brethren, in a special manner, the necessity of the sound religious training and moral formation of all who undertake this apostolate. They must be « nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine » and « exercise themselves unto godliness » (*1 Tim. 4, 6-7*). In a word, they must undergo a training which embraces the whole man, and which brings mind and heart

and will into subjection to Christ, so that each apostle of Catholic Action may show himself « an example of good works in doctrine, in integrity » (*Tit. 2, 7*). It is this integrity of christian life, solidly grounded in doctrine, nourished by the frequent reception of the Sacraments, supported by prayer and the practice of christian virtue, that characterises the Catholic Actionist and makes him a faithful soldier of Christ in his home, in his work or profession and in every phase of his social life. This task of training falls primarily on the clergy and religious who, by the zealous fulfillment of this sacred duty, will provide an ever-increasing number of fervent men and women, and of youth who, obedient to the voice of the Supreme Pastor and to the directions of their bishops, will become devoted and earnest co-workers in leading others to God and to His Holy Church. Here then is the special field for your zealous collaborators, for those generous souls consecrated to Catholic Action, whose one great desire is to devote themselves to the spreading of the Kingdom of Christ. As apostles of their brothers in blood they may win countless souls to Christ and, enlarging His Kingdom in India, may effect an ever wider extension of the inestimable blessings of that Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness, of justice, of love and of peace. What greater blessing could We wish your nation, what nobler ambition could inspire the Catholics of all India than the realisation of such a divine plan?

With all Our heart therefore We commend to the clergy and faithful committed to your care this admirable apostolate, which corresponds so effectively to the needs of the Church in these days. And as an earnest of Our paternal interest, as an incentive to still greater effort, as a pledge of abundant celestial favours, We cordially impart to you, Venerable Brethren, and to all those who, under your guidance, may collaborate with you in the noble work of spreading the Kingdom of God, the fullness of Our Apostolic Benediction.

Given at the Vatican on the thirtieth of January, nineteen hundred and forty eight, the ninth year of Our Pontificate.

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