



The Pastoral Letter: “*Sanctum Evangelium*”

*To All the Faithful of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church,
Peace and Apostolic benedictions:*

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, rightly called the Good News of Salvation to All Peoples, enjoins upon us as followers of that same Lord, Jesus Christ, that we be willing to sacrifice the comforts of our lives, take up our Cross and follow our Blessed Lord, Who Himself set the example for us, of doing humble and willing service to the Will of His Father in Heaven.

Recent years have witnessed, with increasing frequency, a rampant attack upon the Christian Faith with a ferocity, vehemence, violence and vitriol from many and varied sources throughout the world, but most especially from those sources and areas where the enemies of the Cross of Christ are most firmly entrenched: attacks, the likes of which have not been seen in many centuries. It is of note too, that the enemies of the Cross of Christ are not just those whose faith is at odds with the Christian Faith and Christian view of life, but equally so, from those who falsely, under the banner of Christ, plot to undermine and subvert the very Faith and practice of Christianity and who seek to effectually deny to the Faithful, the right to freely practice and guide their lives according to the intrinsic doctrines, principles, expressions and ministry of their Faith. Christians are being persecuted not only in countries where there has historically been a hostility to the Faith of those who profess a belief in Jesus Christ, but also in those so-called civilized countries of the West, where once the Faith of Christ ruled both the throne and home of their citizens, and whose laws and culture have been bequeathed to them by their Christian forbears. Christians, and their Faith, are now attacked almost universally throughout the world and are persecuted by various means, attempting to silence the Voice of Christ, crying in the wilderness, weeping for His children, from having any place or mention in the public arena or forums of civic life and activity. The fact that nearly all of the social services to aid the benefit of our fellow citizens were begun under the direction of the Christian Church, as an obligation imposed upon Christians to care for the homeless, the widows and orphans as well as those less fortunate, since as Christians, we believe that all men are our brothers and we thus ARE our brothers' keeper, has conveniently been lost, forgotten or discounted as the government proclaims its own right to usurp, forbid, prohibit, proscribe, control, direct, limit, restrict, or dictate the actions and works of all social service agencies and institutions regardless of their foundational principles. All of this being done in the name of “equal rights and non-discrimination”, cases which may, but in most cases do not actually exist.

All of this being done in the unstated yet ever present name and goal of socially engineering the lives of all mankind, without regard for the underpinnings of faith that has been the foundation and bedrock of those very societies and institutions, as well as of their members and beneficiaries.

Nowhere has the persecution of Christians been more intense and more severe in recent times, than in the regions of the Middle East, especially those areas currently under the control and siege of the Islamic State, with their vast army of cohorts and sympathizers throughout the world. So vast and encompassing have these persecutions been, and which continue as I write these words, that the very existence of a Christian presence in the cradle lands of Christianity is almost guaranteed extinction and total annihilation. Our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus cry out to us without ceasing, seeking for our prayers and works of support for them as they shoulder their cross and follow Jesus, praying for relief from the barbarisms they must endure, for the strength to endure their sufferings and trials, to remain faithful unto death, even unto death for Him Who died for us all, some on the cross, some by beheadings, some by fire, some by rape, slavery and mutilation... all by torture. Despite these screams and pleas from our brothers and sisters, governments throughout the world, both Christian and secular, as well as many individual Christians, turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to their plight, preferring to remain aloof from the conflicts that precipitated such atrocities and massacres and relegating them to cases of foreign unrest, best left to those countries to handle in their own way, and thereby allowing and giving unspoken but yet official sanction to the continued religious and ethnic genocide being perpetrated upon our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, as well as many of other faiths who do not adhere to the stream of "religious belief" propagated by their oppressors.

In our own country and in many other countries throughout the world, any profession of the Christian Faith, Christian principles of life, a Christian view point of the world or even the personal practice of belief and Faith, is met with and subjected to censure, hostility, loss of freedom, loss of business, loss of financial security and loss of even a voice to protest such reprisals or seizures. This in a land that proclaims the fundamental right to a Freedom of Religion for all its citizens, but which is interpreted by those currently in positions of power and influence, to designate and apply only to those who espouse the views held by the secular world and who oppose the Christian Faith and viewpoint. All others must be silenced and oppressed until they either conform to the government's and society's views, or who go quietly into the night to be forgotten and thereby remain invisible, who can be controlled, manipulated and even eliminated from any presence in the public sphere where they might exercise any influence, even over their own children or fellow believers. Many undeniably Christian organizations are being required by courts, colleges and government officials to permit, nay, even mandated, to designate non-Christians and those who hold hostile views of the Christian Faith, to be the leaders and moderators of those very organizations. Others seek to silence and muzzle the Church's very own leaders to prevent them from proclaiming the full Christian Faith, and to require those who work in or who officially represent the Church, to hold, practice that Faith, or at the very least not to oppose the teachings of the Faith. These leaders are attacked and threatened with legal action and sanctions under the banners of so-called discrimination, intolerance, prejudice, bigotry, hatred, unfairness, inequity, creating a hostile work environment, and a denial of the violators' "civil rights". There are some, even many, who would seek to eliminate and restrict the Church's right to establish ANY qualifications, requirements or standards for behavior, membership, rights, privileges and even ordination

within the Church and its organizations and institutions, which do not meet with the views of these activists who would do violence and violate the Church's and all Christians own rights and privileges in society.

Yes, my brothers and sisters, the Christian Faith is under attack everywhere and almost universally, and I am sorry to say that the blame for much of this persecution must fall upon our own shoulders. We have compromised ourselves; we have become complacent; we have remained silent when we should have spoken up. We have failed to teach when we should have been instructing and proclaiming to the world the Message of Salvation and the principles of the Faith. We have failed to fight for and protect the Church and the principles which undergird her and are her foundation. We have succumbed to the will of the enemies of the Cross, and have allowed ourselves to be bullied into compliance with the very things we swore to oppose as followers of Christ. We have failed to proclaim Redemption and Salvation; we have failed to acknowledge and identify sin where it is; we have failed to proclaim the necessity of repentance of that sin and the necessary amendment of our ways. We have failed to act when our brothers and sisters first witnessed and recognized the impending persecutions in their homelands. We have failed to beseech Our Heavenly Father to hear us, to hear our prayers, and to come to our aid and the aid of our brethren. We are not isolated Christians, we are a family of Faith, a Communion of Saints. We are united as one with each other in the Mystical Body of Christ. What happens to one, happens to all; when one suffers, we all suffer; when one loses his life, we all suffer that death.

We do not stand alone in this condemnation. History has been replete with instances of the falling away of the Faithful from the principles of Faith and practice. God's own first Chosen People, the Hebrews of Old Testament time fell into the same sad state of affairs more than once. After the building of the Temple by Solomon and when the acts of dedication and sacrifice were concluded, God entered into a covenant with His Chosen People. His covenant included both a promise and a warning or curse regarding Israel's faithfulness or lack thereof to the covenant with God. Second Chronicles gives the text of that covenant:

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land... But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will pluck you up from my land that I have given you, and this house that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples" (7:12-14, 19-20).

While it is true that this Covenant was made with Solomon on behalf of the Hebrew Peoples, Christians have always understood the Old Testament as prefiguring the events, covenants and fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament as being completed and given new meaning in the New Testament. Thus Jesus is our new covenant with God and we are His Chosen People. God still demands in His Covenant with us, the same faithfulness He once required in the Covenant made with Solomon, and He promises His

faithful and Divine protection upon those who remain true and faithful to this promise, and He also holds forth the same warning of withholding His protection if we betray that covenant in Christ. And so, we should take these words of Second Chronicles to heart, to humble ourselves, to engage our hearts in prayer and to turn from our wicked ways, to seek His forgiveness and protection and to commit ourselves to remaining ever faithful to our promise and our in mission to make Him known to all the world and to teach His ways to mankind, calling ourselves and them to repentance and service in the Kingdom of God... His Holy Church.

Bearing in mind the obligation we have to pray diligently for each other and for our Holy Mother the Church and her mission and to bear each other's burdens; and equally mindful of my obligation to guide and direct that portion of Christ's flock entrusted to my pastoral care and to lead by example and admonition in the way of obedience to Christ's command that we love one another as He has loved us, I am taking this opportunity to exercise my authority as Primate of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church to enjoin upon all of the clergy and faithful, the salutary practices of the ages with regards to the intention, object and application of certain prayers during the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for specific intentions as determined to be necessary for a period of time, as yet to be determined. The two practices to which I refer are the historic Leonine Prayers said after Low Mass and the Oratio Imperata.

The Leonine Prayers

In 1859, Pope Pius IX, facing rebellion against his temporal sovereignty in the course of the Risorgimento, ordered that Masses celebrated in the Papal States be followed by three Ave Marias, a Salve Regina, a versicle and response, and four collects. He did not make these prayers obligatory in other countries, but did ask Catholics everywhere to pray for the defeat of those bent on destroying the Holy See's temporal sovereignty, and to prevent the loss of the Papal States and the diminution of the authority of the Pope as a temporal ruler therein. The first of the Papal States was lost in 1860 and the remaining States in 1870. The Pope considered himself to be the "prisoner of the Vatican" until 1929 when the City State of The Vatican City was formally recognized as a sovereign state under the sole spiritual and temporal authority of the Holy Father.

On 6 January 1884, in the context of anti-clerical, political and social developments in the new Kingdom of Italy, Pope Leo XIII ordered that these same prayers be recited throughout the world. In 1886, the prayer that follows the Salve Regina was modified to make it a prayer for the conversion of sinners and "the freedom and exaltation of Holy Mother Church". The prayer to Saint Michael was added at the same time.

Two slight changes were made later to the prayer after the Salve Regina, and in 1904, Pope Pius X granted permission to add at the conclusion of the Leonine Prayers a threefold invocation, "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us", a permission that was universally availed of.

In 1929, the state of The Vatican City was created, thereby resolving the troubled relationship between the Holy See and the Italian state, which had been the object of the Leonine Prayers, and thus removing their *raison d'être*. But the following year, 1930, Pope Pius XI ordered that the Leonine Prayers should be offered

"to permit tranquility and freedom to profess the faith to be restored to the afflicted people of Russia", not, as is sometimes said, "for the conversion of Russia".

The 26 September 1964 Instruction *Inter Oecumenici* on implementing the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council decreed: "The Leonine Prayers are suppressed". Thus in the Roman Catholic Church it has now become the practice to not recite these prayers after Mass, except in those cases where the now designated extraordinary rite of the Mass is celebrated.

It has been the practice of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church however, to continue the use of the Leonine Prayers despite their suppression within the Roman Catholic Church of current times. We have never directed a specific object for their intention other than that specified by the Holy Father, first in 1904 and then later in 1930. In light of this lack of object or intention and due to the changed conditions of the Church in modern times, I am now directing that the said Leonine Prayers said after Low Mass together with the *Salve Regina*, the prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel, the prayer for the Old Roman Catholic Church, the Divine Praises and the three fold invocation to the Sacred Heart be recited for the "Relief of our brothers and sisters in the Christian Faith from all persecutions throughout the world; and for the liberty, freedom and exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church to continue in her faithful mission of service and obedience to Christ Jesus our Lord". This directive is to be observed in all churches, parishes, missions, religious houses, and other places where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass may be celebrated, within the North American Old Roman Catholic Church and by all clergy subject to our jurisdiction wherever they may be and at whatever time or in whatever location they are, in accordance with the conditions set forth below.

The Oratio Imperata

The *Oratio Imperata* is a specific Collect together with its accompanying *Secreta* and *Postcommunion* prayers, that may be mandated by the proper ecclesiastical authority of a Diocese, Ecclesiastical Province or worldwide to be said at certain times and on certain days, during the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for a specified period of time as an invocation for Divine assistance within the life of the Church and/or in the lives of the Faithful or of the diocese, province or nation.

The customary tradition of reciting such prayers is rooted in the Apostolic age, when lay people asked the help and assistance of their bishops in times of natural calamity, war or any grave public danger to society. In the Middle Ages, various saints, e.g. Saint Isidore the Farmer, were invoked for the assistance of granting rain, while Saint Roch was invoked for dire calamities and protection from the Black Plague.

Present Catholic discipline within our jurisdiction of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church allows that any Collect from the various *Votive Masses* or *Diverse Prayers* found in the Missal may be prescribed by the local ordinary as this type of prayer. The prayer itself cannot be a permanent religious recitation, but rather is only to be used for a short period of time of need. The prayers are recited at the appointed places within the Mass as they are found in the Missal: the Collect with the other Collects said at that Mass, the

Secreta with the other Secretas and the Postcommunion with the other Postcommunion prayers before the conclusion of the Mass and the final Blessing.

The invocative prayers prescribed as Oratio Imperata must conform to the stated conditions as outlined below:

- It must only be composed of one, singular prayer
- It must be primarily addressed to a personage of the Holy Trinity, not directly to any interceding angel, saint, or a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- It must be prayed and recited by all priests celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in their respective churches and oratories, as well as exempted ones of the diocese, province or the world according to the manner the Oratio was authorized
- It can never be said under a single conclusion with the Collect of the Mass, but after the Collect of the Mass and the prescribed privileged commemorations of the respective Mass are concluded;
- It is prohibited on all Feasts of the first and second classes, in votive Masses of the 1st and 2nd class, in sung Masses, and when the privileged commemorations have completed the number permitted for that particular day.
- An oratio imperata for the deceased is said only on Ferias of the Fourth Class and in low Votive or Requiem Masses of the Fourth Class.

In very rare cases of enduring public calamities lasting a longer time, (i.e. national war, calamitous plague, etc.), the local Ordinary may indeed impose a suitable Oratio Imperata for an extended period covering the whole time of the said calamity or unfortunate event, but then this Oratio Imperata:

- May only be recited during Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Is prohibited on the same days more than once, or in the same days coinciding with relevant liturgical days.

The appropriate ecclesiastical authorities who have the power to command the recitation of the Oratio Imperata may also, under specific situations and with the consent of the Primate of our Church, modify any of the conditions for the recitation of these prayers.

Again, bearing in mind the conditions throughout the world and especially our own country where the Church, her teachings, her authority, her ministry, her mission and even her very credibility and origin are under continuous attack and her freedom and liberty are hampered, curtailed and restricted, I hereby enjoin upon the clergy of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church throughout its jurisdiction the Oratio Imperata For the Defense of the Church (modified from the Votive Mass formerly called the Mass Against the Heathen) to be recited by all clergy throughout our jurisdiction until the times of persecutions have

ceased. The text of this Oratio Imperata and the conditions by which it is to be recited are to be found herein.

Oratio Imperata: For the Defense of the Church

Collect

Almighty and Everlasting God, in Whose hand is the dominion of all rulers and the government of all nations, Who art our strength in adversity, our health in weakness, and our comfort in sorrow; we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord, to graciously look down with compassion upon Thy children who cry out to Thee, and to hear their petitions; we pray Thee to grant Thy succor, as also Thine ever-present protection and guiding wisdom to us, and to Thy Church: that the nations and peoples of the powers that oppress and persecute Thy Church and Thy faithful people, O Lord, and who trust in the fierceness of their own might, may be confounded and soundly defeated in their works, by the strength of Thine own all-powerful right hand. Grant also we beseech Thee, O Heavenly Father, the strength to endure the trials that beset us, that in sharing the sufferings of Thine only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, we may yet endure these sufferings with a spirit of acceptance, with patience in tribulations, and showing forth a love for those who are persecuted and a forgiveness for those who persecute them, all the while following the example of our Lord, Who forgave even those who put Him to death on the cross, with the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Secreta

Give heed, O Lord, to the Sacrifice which we offer unto Thee: that Thou wouldest deliver them that strive to remain faithful and who fight for Thee, from the wiles and wickedness of Thine enemies and the enemies of Thy Holy Church; stablish them with the protection of Thy sure defense and keep them safe from all the dangers and adversities that beset them. Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Postcommunion

Behold, O God, our Defender, and protect from all assaults of the enemies of Thy Son Jesus Christ, those who wouldst strive to remain faithful and fight for Thee and for Thy Church; that they might be delivered from all distress, that they might serve Thee with a quiet mind, and that they might see Thy vindication and the glory of Thy victory over the enemies of the Cross. Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Regulations Governing the Recitation of the Oratio Imperata

The Oratio Imperata: For the Defense of The Church, is decreed for the duration of the persecution of the Church in The United States of America and also in those other countries where Holy Mother Church is

being hindered in her ministry or where her Freedom to propagate her doctrine and abide safely by adhering to her teachings without hindrance or restriction is under assault.

- It is enjoined upon all clergy who celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in any church, mission, chapel, religious house or other location where the Mass may be celebrated which is under the jurisdiction of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church.
- It is enjoined upon all clergy subject to the obedience of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church, wherever they may be, as a personal obligation and religious duty.
- It is to be said as the final Collect for that Mass following the Collect of the day and any privileged commemorations and is not to be joined together with the conclusion of the collect of the day or Feast, but rather is to be joined to the conclusion of the additional collects thus said, and the Secreta and Postcommunion will likewise be the final prayers in their proper places during that Mass observing the same formula for conclusions.
- The Oratio Imperata is prohibited only upon the following days: Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, Low Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, Trinity Sunday, Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christ the King, Immaculate Conception BVM, Annunciation BVM, Assumption BVM, Solemnity of St Joseph, All Saints, Ash Wednesday and all of the days of Holy Week without exception. This is a modification of the ancient prohibitions, being made now to conform to present customary church attendance and the infrequency of lay attendance at daily Mass during the week in most churches.
- The restrictions to recitation only on the Monday, Wednesday and Friday of each week is hereby suspended and the Oratio Imperata is to be said on each and any day on which Mass is said unless listed above.
- On days on which the Oratio Imperata is prohibited from being recited during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, there is no such prohibition forbidding the priest from reciting the Collect of the Oratio Imperata after the Mass or after the recitation of the Leonine Prayers.
- The Oratio Imperata is to be recited only once each day in any church, chapel, mission, religious house or any other location for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is under the jurisdiction of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church, on the days appointed.

Regulations Governing the Recitation of the Leonine Prayers After Mass

- The Leonine Prayers are to be said for the object and intention of “the relief of our brothers and sisters in the Christian Faith from all persecutions throughout the world; and for the liberty, freedom and exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church to continue in her faithful mission of service and obedience to Christ Jesus our Lord” immediately after the Last Gospel at all Low Masses, unless it

is a Funeral Mass, a Mass celebrated with some external solemnity such as First Communion, Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage or Religious Profession; or if a function or pious exercise follows immediately upon the Low Mass, such as Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, etc.

- If three consecutive Low Masses are celebrated without interruption by virtue of the concessions granted to priests for the Feasts of Christmas Day and All Souls Day, the Leonine Prayers are to be said only after the final Mass.
- The Leonine Prayers are ordered to be said after all Low Masses according to the instructions given above, but nothing is to be interpreted as prohibiting them from being recited at other times, even at the principle Mass of Sundays and Feasts if it be customary or is determined with the Ordinary's permission to be salutary.
- The Leonine Prayers are prohibited at all Masses whether it be a Low Mass, High Mass, Sung Mass or Solemn Mass, on the following days only: Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, Low Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, Trinity Sunday, Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christ the King, Immaculate Conception BVM, Annunciation BVM, Assumption BVM, Solemnity of St Joseph, All Saints, Ash Wednesday and all of the days of Holy Week without exception.

We have made modifications to the ancient and traditional regulations for the recitation of the Leonine Prayers and the Oratio Imperata due to the changed patterns of lay attendance at Mass in the current day. As a general rule lay attendance at daily Mass during the week is low if at all, and thus the faithful would be deprived of the benefits of praying for their brothers and sisters in the Christian Faith and joining themselves by prayer to the sufferings of their fellow Christians who are suffering throughout the world should these prayers be recited only at Low Masses and be prohibited from recitation at the principal Mass of the Sunday if that Mass be High, Sung or Solemn, and it be the only Mass of the day in that church. Thus the prohibitions have been relaxed and the limitations been reduced to allow for a greater participation of the faithful in these pious and salutary practices of Holy Mother Church for the benefit of spiritual and/or temporal relief for her children everywhere.

Given this Twenty-seventh day of February in the Year of our Lord, Two Thousand and fifteen, being the Feast of Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin; at our Chancery in Springvale, Maine in the Thirty-seventh year of our Episcopacy and the Twentieth year of our Primacy.

+ Eduardus Novat

+Eduardus Jacobus, *Nova Terrensis*

Primate of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church

