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POPE PIUS XII
ON SODALITIES

Marian Reprint No. 73 — 74

ABOUT THE REPRINT

Even though more than a year has elapsed since the saintly passing of Pius XII, it is still difficult to assess the correct measure of his unique contribution to the development of the Church in this century. Perhaps this is nowhere more true than in the realm of his influence on the laity. During his pontificate, time and time again, he emphasized the necessity of lay participation in the apostolate of the Church. The *Marian Reprints* series is happy to bring to its readers a collection of the more important documents of the late pontiff concerning a phase of the apostolate most dear to his heart — the Marian Sodality.

The first four documents are of an official nature. We are grateful to the Queen's Work for permission to reprint them. The fifth and final document is added to give us a glimpse of the Holy Father on a less formal occasion as he addressed a group of high school sodalists with evident fatherly interest and love. We are grateful to Father Francis P. Tomai, S.M.M., of the *Queen of All Hearts* for reprint permission.

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(published with ecclesiastical approval)

A
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REPRINT

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IDEALS and NORMS for Sodalities

SODALITY GOLDEN JUBILEE ADDRESS OF POPE PIUS XII

(January 21, 1945)

INTRODUCTION

January 21, 1945, Welcome to 4000 Sodalists from 42 nations on the occasion of Pope Pius XII's golden jubilee of his Sodality reception and consecration (1).

N.B. Pius XII had made his consecration in the Sodality of the Capranica College, Rome, on December 13, 1894.

I. SPIRITUALITY OF SODALITIES OF OUR LADY

- A. *Its foundation*: a complete, lifetime Sodality consecration of oneself to Our Lady (2);
- B. *Its program*: drawn up by experience and codified in the Sodality rule; a program of interior and apostolic life, and defense of the Church, inflamed by the Holy Spirit (3, 4, 5).
- C. *Sodalists' true devotion toward Mary*: one that is chivalrous and active, at her call in everything, for life (6, 7, 8).

II. TRUE SODALITIES MEET MODERN NEEDS

- A. *Their glorious past*: Examples of outstanding actions of Sodalists in past centuries (9, 10).
- B. *Their glorious present* (11):
 1. Needs of modern times:
 - a. *In civil society*: men who work for personal perfection in order to reconstruct disputed society (12, 13, 14).
 - b. *In the Church*: Catholics who are real men, strong and fearless, and confess their faith openly in word and deed every-time when necessary (15, 16, 17).
 2. Genuine Sodalities always strive to form and organize Catholics to meet these needs (18).
 - a. Sodalists need not only courage, generosity, dedication (19);
 - b. Sodalists must also master the weapons to fight for truth (20):
 - (1) A mastery of Church's doctrine, moral teachings, liturgy, inner life, external activities of Church, its history (20).
 - (2) General and professional training of the mind, according to the individual's ability and state of life (20-21).
According to their abilities, all Sodalities strive to acquire a mastery of such skills because:
 - (A) Apostolic effectiveness depends much on their intellectual, social, and professional competency, as well as moral and spiritual qualities:
 - (B) Sodalities always have had as goal, restoration of a Christian social order through the professions (22).

III. EFFECTIVENESS OF SODALITIES' APOSTOLATE

- A. Their specialization: Sodalities for all states of life and all ranks in society (23, 24). Witness of Pius XI (25).
- B. Their spirit of prudence and cooperation (25-29).
- C. Source of apostolic effectiveness: a fervent interior life (30).

IV. ESTEEM FOR SODALITY MEMBERSHIP

- A. With St. John Eudes, consider membership in Sodality a great grace (31).
- B. Apostolic Blessing (32).

Introduction

(1) Dear Sons and Daughters, a thoughtful devotedness has inspired you to come and celebrate with Us the fiftieth anniversary of a delightful memory of Our life — that of Our Consecration to the Most Blessed Virgin in the Sodality of Our Lady at Our Alma Mater, the Capranica College. Our first word of greeting is to cry out with the enthusiasm of a grateful heart, *Magnificat Dominum mecum et exultemus nomen eius simul!* "Glorify the Lord with me; all of us together exalt His Name!" (Ps. 33:4).

I. Spirituality of Sodalities of Our Lady

(2) Consecration to the Mother of God in a Sodality of Our Lady is an entire gift of oneself for one's whole life and for eternity. This gift does not consist merely of a sentimental formula. On the contrary, it is a gift that produces results. It verifies itself in the intensity of a life like Christ's and Mary's, an apostolic life, that makes the Sodalist Mary's ambassador and, one might say, her visible hands on earth. This gift proves itself genuine in an interior life that is too great to contain itself and spontaneously overflows into all types of external works of genuine devotion, worship, charity, and zeal.

(3) There you have what is stressed with particular emphasis in your first Rule. Note that in his act of consecration the Sodalist freely and resolutely accepted the commission (a) to apply himself in his particular state of life; (b) to dedicate himself not in a half-hearted way but with great enthusiasm, to the salvation and perfection of others through the kind and amount of action that is in harmony with his particular social condition; (c) to give himself energetically to defending the Church of Christ. This is the magnificent program outlined for the Sodalist in his Rules.

(4) As a matter of fact, these Rules have merely expressed in precise terms and have, in a sense, "codified" the history and customary practices of Sodalities of Our Lady. These Sodalities which were begun providentially by the well-meriting Society of Jesus, have been approved and repeatedly praised in highest terms by the Holy See.

(5) Very clearly, We in no way at all consider a Sodality to be simply a union of motionless and inactive pious people, in other words, simply a refuge for weak souls menaced by dangers. Nor do We in any way consider a Sodality to be the type of organization which gives itself completely to rushing about doing external works that lack inner value; such activity can merely stir up and kindle a fire of straw that burns itself out quickly.

Scripture says (Prov. 6:27): "Can a person hide fire in his bosom in such a way that his garments will not catch fire?" That question certainly applies to disordered human passion stirred up in one's heart. To a much greater degree is that question verified in the love of charity which is kindled and kept burning constantly by the Holy Spirit!

(6) Sodalists' devotion to Our Lady cannot be the miserly kind that looks upon the powerful Mother of God as a distributor of gifts, especially temporal ones. Neither can the Sodalists' devotion be one undisturbed rest, in which they think only of removing the holy cross of anxieties, struggles, and sufferings from their lives. Nor can it be an emotional devotion made up of delightful sensations and enthusiastic demonstrations. Similarly it cannot be a devotion that seems to be holy but actually is too exclusively concerned about its own spiritual advantages.

(7) A Sodalist is a true son of Mary and knight of Our Lady and as such cannot be satisfied with giving her lip service. He must be at his Lady's call in everything. He must be the guardian and defender of her great prerogatives and her cause. He must bring to his fellowmen divine graces and gifts from the Mother who is Mother of everyone. He must fight without truce under the command of her who "destroys all heresies throughout the whole world" (See Roman Breviary, Comm. Feasts B.V.M., 3 Noct., ant. 7).

(8) The Sodalist has pledged himself to perpetual service under Our Lady's standard. He no longer has the right to lay down his arms through fear of attacks and persecutions. He can desert and abandon his post of combat and honor, only by being unfaithful to his own word.

II. True Sodalities Meet Modern Needs

(9) You have pledged yourselves to defend the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church knows this and counts on you just as in the past she has counted on generations of Sodalists who have preceded you. She has never been disappointed in her expectations; for, with great generosity your predecessors have cleared and marked the road for you.

(10) Sodalists have fought in the front lines in all battles to defend Christian Europe and to keep the tyranny of heresy from spreading. With the spoken word, with pen and the printing press, they have defended Catholic truth in discussions, controversies, and learned treatises. Thus they sustained the courage of the faithful and came to the aid of those professing the Faith. They worked with Catholic priests by assisting and supporting these priests as they carried out their difficult tasks in the face of great opposition. Sodalists relentlessly attacked public

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immorality with means that were always dynamic and effective and even at times novel. On the frontiers of Christianity they sometimes also wielded the sword to defend civilization: Sobieski, Charles of Lorraine, Eugene of Savoy, and other great leaders, together with many thousands of their soldiers, were all Sodalists.

(11) But why search for examples in the past? In our own century also countless thousands of heroic Sodalists in many nations have fought and died while invoking and proclaiming Christ King.

(12) We are confident you will live up to the responsibility entailed in so glorious an inheritance. Here We want to state emphatically that the exemplary Catholics consistently formed by Sodalities of Our Lady from their very beginning perhaps answer better to the urgent needs and other unpredictable conditions of our times than ever before. No other time perhaps has so urgently demanded such Catholics.

(13) As a matter of fact, what does life in civil society nowadays demand? Men, real men! Not the kind who are engrossed in amusements and pleasures, as children are. But men who are thoroughly trained and ready for action. Men to whom it is a sacred duty to use every available means to perfect themselves.

Personally, We should love to see on the faces of today's youth a little more of the peaceful gaiety of past years. But the times must be taken as they are, and ours are grave, bitterly and inexorably grave.

(14) Civil society in our day demands men who unhesitatingly march forward over the rough roads of today's wretched economic conditions and also capably support their profession and aim at the perfection demanded of those whom Providence has entrusted to them. Finally, it demands men who reject mediocrity in the exercise of everyone in the work of reconstruction after so great a disaster (World War II).

(15) And what does the Church demand? Catholics, true Catholics, well-trained and strong! Once before We spoke of the profound social transformation in our times. The war has accelerated this transformation immeasurably; perhaps even now We can say it is practically completed. Unfortunately, everywhere and especially in the large cities there has been a continual and serious numerical decrease of the type of Catholic who moves ahead vigorously on the strong current of a solid Catholic tradition which penetrates and saturates his whole life and thus safely protects and guides him.

Our present crisis includes women as well as men, and girls as much as boys. Women today find themselves trampled upon abjectly in the struggles of daily life, in the professions, in the arts, and now also in war. Keep in mind that social upheavals seriously affect and hurt women much more than men.

(16) Our times then need Catholics who since their youth have been so deeply grounded in the Faith that they will remain true to it even without the help and support of fervent companions. Our times need Catholics who fix their eyes on the ideal of holiness, purity, and Christian virtue and in face of the sacrifices entailed strive with all their might to realize that ideal in their daily life, always moving straight ahead, always on the side of right, conquering all temptation and enticements. Here, dear brothers and sisters, is a heroism that is frequently unnoticed by others; but it is just as precious and worthy of admiration as martyrdom of blood.

(17) Our times demand fearless Catholics who consider it entirely normal to profess their faith openly in word and deed whenever God's law and Christian honor require it. Real men, whole men, determined and fearless! Not half-men whom the world itself today rejects, thrusts back, and tramples upon!

(18) To form such men and such Catholics has always been the goal of well-organized and active Sodalities. Keep in mind the fact that the enemies of Christ and His Church never lay down their arms even when they pretend to have peaceable intentions. Besides bloody persecutions and other violent attacks, they have other methods of war, such as perverting and poisoning the minds of men. They are given unintentional support by many people who allow themselves to be misled and warped by them.

(19) In these unceasing struggles, generosity and courage together with humility, untiring fidelity, and a spirit of dedication are indispensable for every Sodalist. But these alone do not suffice. Under Mary's protection, your task is to win over to Christ the men of today by fighting for the truth with the weapons of truth. To do so, you must know how to use these weapons. How will you successfully secure a mastery of them?

(20) Mastery of the weapons of truth comes above all from a study of religion, its doctrine and moral teachings, its liturgy, its inner life and external activities, its history. Above all, but not exclusively! Otherwise, you would depart from the constant practice of past Sodalities of Our Lady which always made use of the means best suited for encouraging training of the mind, both general and professional, a training always in harmony with the individual's talents and personal conditions. This training of the mind is one of the characteristics of Sodalities. Their Academies (study groups) are proof of that. And thanks be to God, such a tradition has not been abandoned.

(21) Undoubtedly, such general and professional training cannot everywhere be developed to the degree it has been, for example, in the Sodal-

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ity at Valencia in Spain. This Sodality's various sections — juridical, scientific, literary, technical, and especially its medical one with clinic and dispensary — are fully equipped with the tools necessary for study and practical work. Such sections, thanks to the cooperation of distinguished professors who are themselves members of that Sodality, assure the Sodalists of an eminent position in the field of their respective professions.

(22) In all parts of the world, Sodalities worthy of the name have similar training, even if on a more modest scale, and consider it one of their distinctive characteristics. The first reason for such training is that the effectiveness of every Sodalists' apostolic work depends not merely on his moral and spiritual qualities but in great part on his intellectual, social, and professional attainments. Secondly, from their very beginning Sodalities have had as their goal the restoration of a Christian social order and for that reason have exercised their apostolate particularly in and by means of the professions.

III. Effectiveness of Sodalities' Apostolate

(23) The ideal of restoring a Christian social order has brought about the formation of distinct but closely cooperating Sodalities for different states of life and for all ranks in the social order. Thus there are separate Sodalities for priests, "intellectuals," men in high society, women in high society, men studying in college, women college students, and for all classes down to those of the poor bootblacks of Beyrouth and of the young paper boys of Buenos Aires. The Sodality of medical students at the University of Paris provided the first nucleus of the Guild of St. Luke for Catholic doctors. The United States of America has its Sodalities of nurses.

(24) We recall a personal experience of Our Own at Munich: The men's Sodality, then flourishing at St. Michael's Church, greatly enriched the Bavarian capital with truly Christian family life and with manly courage in public profession of the Faith. As a final example, We want to mention that you are all in a sense represented close by Our person, in fact very close, day and night, by the members of Our Swiss Guard's Sodality of Our Lady, established under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary.

(25) Great results have been accomplished by these Sodalities in their specialized fields! Great results, too, have been brought about for the common good through cooperation in which each Sodality contributes its particular skill! Great results, too, in the more diverse works of zeal and charity! On a solemn occasion, Our Glorious Predecessor, Pius XI, recalled "the great results which Sodalities of Our Lady have achieved

in this century, in fact for many centuries, by cooperative efforts in the vast fields of the apostolate. Wherever the need or opportunity presented itself, they cooperated with each other for the salvation of souls redeemed by Christ. Precisely as directed and inspired by their Mother and Queen and Patroness, Sodalities made use of humble and simple as well as prominent and highly systematized methods of cooperation" (Audience, March 30, 1930).

(26) Almost as if confirming the truth of these words, you are presenting Us with two precious gifts: your rich spiritual offerings which are a great support and consolation to Us in the discharge of Our extremely important office; your material offerings, which will help Us protect poor refugees, Our dearest sons and your brothers in Christ, from the cold. Our gratitude goes out also beyond this large but intimate gathering, and reaches out all over the world to Sodalities that have desired to join with you in heart and in prayer.

(27) In accord with the teaching of the Divine Master and in imitation of the incomparable example of their heavenly Patroness and Mother, Sodalities love to do good "in secret," and very often the Father in heaven "who sees in secret," (Matt. 6:4) is their only witness. Very often, too, they contribute their services to the works of other organizations and provide them with their finest recruits.

(28) There is hardly any form of apostolic or charitable work which was not started by Sodalists in the past. They have always sought for new needs to care for, new aspirations to satisfy. These activities, once begun by them on a modest scale, later became strong enough to run by themselves, but they were always certain they could rely on the immediate and discreet support and cooperation of Sodalities.

(29) Here We certainly cannot omit mentioning two enthusiastic Sodalists and faithful champions of Catholic Action in Italy, Mario Fani and Giovanni Acquaderni.

(30) Without a doubt, the inmost source of the Sodalities' fruitful apostolate is a fervent life, one that is nourished by a devotion to Mary that continually becomes more delicate and at the same time more active, a life which according to your own Rule strives for sanctity itself. This life remains hidden in the interior of hearts. Nevertheless, it reveals itself in the works it produces, in the numerous vocations it helps develop, and in the wonderful legion of saints, blessed, and martyrs who are its evidence in heaven.

IV. Esteem for Sodality Membership

(31) Dear sons and daughters, wisely take as your own, St. John Eudes'

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devout prayer to the Blessed Virgin: "Very deeply am I in your debt . . . for having accepted me into your sacred Sodality, a true school of virtue and of dedication to God . . . O Mother of Grace, this is one of the greatest favors I have received from God through your intercession" (*The Admirable Heart of the Most Sacred Mother of God*, Paris, 1908, Book XII, page 355).

(32) Confident that you will correspond with ever-increasing fidelity to so great a favor and will prove yourselves more worthy of it from day to day, We invoke on you and all Sodalists throughout the world the protection of Jesus and of His most holy Mother, and at the same time, as a pledge of choicest graces, We bestow on you and your dear families Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.

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APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION ON SODALITIES OF OUR LADY (Pope Pius XII — September 27, 1948)

Sixteen Sodalists have become Popes. Forty-seven Sodalists are canonized saints. More than sixty have been beatified. Thirty-nine have founded forty-three religious communities. Many have governed nations. Others have led armies. And Sodalities of Our Lady everywhere have brought Christ to the poor and contributed much to the social apostolate.

It is easy to understand then why His Holiness Pope Pius XII in his Apostolic Constitution, *Bis Saeculari*, could be so enthusiastic about the achievements of Sodalities of Our Lady. His own personal experience had taught him much, too, since he himself had been a Sodalist since 1894.

In *Bis Saeculari*, Pope Pius XII points out the secret of the success of Sodalities of Our Lady: *the faithful observance of their Rules*. Then he makes these Rules "common" for every Sodality of Our Lady throughout the world.

Since the promulgation of *Bis Saeculari* Our Holy Father himself has called this document the "Charter of Sodalities of Our Lady."

It can be safely said that with the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution, *Bis Saeculari*, on September 27, 1948, a new golden era for Sodalities of Our Lady has begun.

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations to Sodalities of Our Lady on the occasion of the Second Centenary of the Golden Bull of Benedict XIV.

Solemn confirmation of the many great privileges granted by the Popes (1).

I. SODALITIES: MODERN AND EFFECTIVE

- A. As in the past, so today, Sodalities erected by the Church are among the most reliable and zealous spiritual forces that defend and spread Catholicism (2).
- B. A number of reasons account for the consistently energetic service of Sodalities to the Church.
 1. their numerical growth (3);
 2. their Rules and methods which prescribe a systematic instruction and training of their members in the interior life so that they will constantly strive for personal holiness (4) by using time-proven, effective means (5-6).
 3. The actual results of this training in Sodalities that faithfully observe their Rules: solid practice of religion, many priestly and religious vocations, canonized saints, the formation of perfect Catholics fully trained for the apostolate (7) — all proving that the Sodality Rule and traditional methods are apt means for training apostles for our modern world (8).
 4. the highly modern, completely adaptable, and most of all the social character of their works (9-11).

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5. their completely Catholic spirit:
 - a. their continual, traditional desire to cooperate with other apostolic organizations (12):
 - b. their eager and complete submission to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy (13), by whom they are established and upon whom they depend (14), with whom they cooperate fully (15) — which submission comes from the Sodality Rules (16), that stress St. Ignatius' "Rules for Thinking With the Church" (17-18).
 - c. their insistence on working not for their own private interests but for the universal good of the Church (19).

II. SODALITIES AND CATHOLIC ACTION

- A. The Sodalities of Our Lady are apostolic organizations which urge their members on to high spiritual perfection and to an outstanding devotion to the Church and to the Blessed Virgin Mary (20).
- B. These Sodalities have full right to the title: "Catholic Action undertaken through the Blessed Virgin Mary's constant care and inspiration" (21-22).

Such a conclusion comes from considering:

1. the nature of Sodalities of Our Lady:
 - a. they possess every characteristic of Catholic Action (21);
 - b. their structure and distinctive methods actually constitute a training school for outstanding Catholics (22).
2. the nature of Catholic Action.
 - a. C.A. is not confined in a closed circle and must not abolish or absorb other apostolic organizations (23);
 - b. C.A. must not wish to reduce all apostolic work to a single formula, since the Church today, as always, wants many kinds joined together under the direction of the bishops and Holy See (24-25);
 - c. all apostolic lay organizations must strive to yield to others the place of honor (25).

III. PAPAL SUMMARY OF SODALITY FUNDAMENTALS

- A. The Sodalities of Our Lady, training schools of holiness and apostolic living, must grow daily stronger. To this end, the Pope in virtue of His Apostolic Authority will set down twelve substantial points which for all times will form a Magna Charta for Sodalities of Our Lady throughout the world (26).
- B. The twelve substantial points to be religiously observed by all Sodalities of Our Lady (27-38):
 - I. Nature of Sodalities; II. Erection and Affiliation; III. Norms;
 - IV. Rules; V. Dependence; VI. Government; VII. Priest-Director;
 - VIII. Marian Character; IX. Careful Selection; X. Formation of Members; XI. Apostolic End, Cooperation; XII. On Same Level as Other Apostolic Organizations.

CONCLUSION

After properly and definitively establishing the twelve substantial norms, Pope Pius XII states that this Apostolic Constitution is to be accepted in its entirety forever, any proposition to the contrary being henceforth null and void (39).

Date of this Apostolic Constitution: September 27, 1948 (40).

Introduction

(1) Two centuries ago today, Benedict XIV in his Golden Bull, *Gloriosae Dominae*, fully strengthened and enriched the Sodalities of Our Lady, which were erected and established in perpetuity by Gregory XIII.¹ On this happy occasion We believe it part of Our Apostolic ministry to congratulate as a Father the directors and members of the Sodalities of Our Lady. Because of their many great services to the Church, We also expressly ratify and solemnly confirm the fully ample privileges which many of our predecessors² and We Ourselves have in the course of almost four centuries granted to the Sodalities of Our Lady.

I. Sodalities: Modern and Effective

(2) In the same Golden Bull Benedict XIV pointed out that "this admirably zealous institute has greatly helped people of every social class."³ We are well aware of these past deeds. We know full well, too, that today these battalions of Mary are energetically striving through the constant care and leadership of the Church's Hierarchy to be among the first to undertake and tirelessly accomplish works for the greater glory of God and the good of souls. Such are the Sodalities that are observing their Rules exactly and are closely following the example of their illustrious predecessors.

There are many reasons why Sodalities of Our Lady must be counted among the most powerful spiritual groups defending, propagating, and fighting for Catholicism.⁴

(3) For one thing, anyone familiar with the history of Sodalities of Our Lady sees clearly that at all times these Sodalities were noted for the thorough formation and the number of their members. Sodalists of past years, however, were not as numerous as those of the present-day, even though without a doubt they were just as apostolic. In previous centuries the number of new affiliations to the *Prima Primaria* never exceeded ten a year, whereas from the beginning of this century, they easily number a thousand a year.

(4) But there is a much more important reason than the fact that Sodalities are numerous. The success of Sodalities of Our Lady derives essentially from the Sodality Rules and methods which guide each Sodalist in his own way to such excellence in the spiritual life⁵ that he can then scale the very heights of sanctity.⁶

(5) The means that the Sodality Rule prescribe are most effective in forming perfect and whole-hearted servants of Christ: the Spiritual Exercises,⁷ the practice of daily meditation and examination of conscience,⁸ frequent reception of the sacraments,⁹ frequent recourse and filial sub-

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mission to a fixed spiritual director,¹⁰ the surrender of oneself completely and forever to the protection of the Virgin Mother of God,¹¹ and a firm, solemn promise to work for one's perfection and that of others.¹²

(6) All these means are naturally able to fan the flames of divine love in Sodalists of Our Lady and to nourish and strengthen the interior life. This life so urgently needed in our modern age; for today, as We regretfully mentioned sometime ago, a large number of men suffer greatly from "complete spiritual emptiness and privation."¹³

(7) These ascetical means were not made a part of the wise Sodality Rules and then neglected. Actually Sodalities in an impressive way have incorporated these means into the daily living of their members. In all Sodalities that are faithfully observing their Rules and traditional methods of procedure, an innocence of life and deep-rooted practice of religion thrives and grows stronger. Moreover, out of the desire to win Christian perfection for themselves and impart it to others, great numbers of Sodalists with the grace of God enter the seminary and religious life. Some of these in fact, rise with unerring flight to the highest pinnacles of sanctity.¹⁴

(8) A serious application to progress in the interior life almost spontaneously produces apostolic works which respond to the constantly changing demands and circumstances of human society. Consequently, We assert without any hesitation that the perfect Catholic, which Sodalities of Our Lady have traditionally been accustomed to form, meets the requirements of our age just as much as those of former times. Indeed, the demand for men solidly formed in the Christian life is perhaps greater now than ever before.¹⁵

(9) For that reason, as We look out on the whole world from the high vantage point of the Chair of Peter and see everywhere the marvelous zeal of so many faithful protecting, vindicating, and promoting the cause of religion, We consider the militant Sodalities of Our Lady deserving of special praise.

From the very beginning Sodalists have professed themselves ready in strict conformity with their Rules¹⁶ — both as groups and individuals — to undertake under the direction of their spiritual Shepherds¹⁷ every apostolic work recommended by our Holy Mother the Church.¹⁸ Numerous pronouncements of the Roman Pontiffs eloquently prove that the Sodalities of Our Lady have fulfilled the responsibility entrusted to them and have thereby greatly enriched the Church.¹⁹

(10) In our confused times violently disturbed by so many calamities, We are greatly consoled by the Sodalists of Our Lady who all over the whole world work so strenuously and effectively in every field of the apostolate.

By getting men of every class to make the *Spiritual Exercises*, Sodalists of Our Lady have aroused them — particularly youth and workingmen — to become men of real virtue who ardently long to live a more Christian life. In their private lives, Sodalists have been quick to come generously and constantly to the relief of those in grave spiritual and material need. In civic legislatures and in positions of supreme power, many have used their influence to promote laws that are in keeping with the principles of the Gospel and social justice.²⁰

(11) We also want to praise Sodalities of Our Lady for organizing or helping associations that are working to put a stop to bad plays and films and to protect the Christian morals of people subjected to a flood of evil books and periodicals.

A type of apostolate so vital today are the many schools established for young people and adults of the poorer classes — technical schools giving workingmen fuller training in their trades,²¹ and particularly those designed to develop a greater skill in the specialized fields of the professions and sciences.²² A great number of Sodalities — for the most part “inter-parish” ones — have done much in this field and have been of inestimable help to the professions and to men of the same trade.²³

The foregoing works have been not only numerous but of great service to the Church.

(12) We praise the Sodalities of Our Lady also because, particularly in recent times, they have always desired sincerely to cooperate in a brotherly spirit with other Catholic organizations. They did so out of the desire to combine their efforts under the authority and direction of their bishops with others and so reap a richer harvest for the Kingdom of Christ.

Furthermore, as We said on another occasion while speaking of Italian Catholic Action,²⁴ Sodalists of Our Lady were among the first in some countries to form Catholic Action groups. So many Sodalists of Our Lady took up this work and rendered such great service to the Church that they deserve to be numbered among the outstanding pioneers of Catholic Action.

(13) All organizations in the Church depend for their power on their obedience to the authority of their spiritual Shepherds. It is the only way they can be united into a well-ordered army.

In this respect, the Sodalities of Our Lady clearly must be rated as highly suitable apostolic instruments inasmuch as they eagerly and completely comply with the wishes of the Holy See — head and foundation of the entire Ecclesiastical Hierarchy²⁵ — and, according to their talents and means, readily and humbly respond to the decrees and directions of their Ordinaries.²⁶

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(14) Anyone who has thoroughly examined the innermost governing power of these Sodalities readily sees that some are under the jurisdiction of bishops and pastors and others — through special privilege — are governed by Us, and in virtue of Our delegated power by the General of the Society of Jesus. All, however, in undertaking and carrying out apostolic works are subject to the authority of the bishop of the diocese and, at times, even to that of the pastor.

(15) The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy upon whom Sodalities of Our Lady fully depend in undertaking and carrying out their work, count them among the forces of the militant apostolate. Sodalities deserve, therefore, by every right — as We have noted on another occasion²⁷ — to be called cooperators in the apostolate of the Hierarchy.

(16) Their “respect and lack of pretense in constantly obeying their spiritual Shepherds” derives of necessity from the Sodality Rules. Through these, Sodalists have made it a common practice to profess unreservedly in their life and conduct whatever the Catholic Church teaches, “praising what she praises, disapproving of what she disapproves of, agreeing with her in everything, and never being ashamed to act in public or in private as becomes a faithful and most dutiful son of such a mother.”²⁸

(17) Sodalities of Our Lady were started by the sons of St. Ignatius and seem to be a kind of offshoot and branch of that religious family. This in no way creates a breach in the close and almost military unity of our Catholic people. The fact is that only a really small number of Sodalities are directed by priests of the Society of Jesus and these, as we have said, only through Our delegated power.

(18) Furthermore, Sodalities of Our Lady have from their very beginning adopted as their outstanding feature the Rules “for thinking with the Church,” and apparently have evolved a natural bent for heeding the words of those whom “the Holy Spirit placed as bishops to rule the Church of God” (Act 20:28). Thereby, they have been and will continue to be of great help to bishops in expanding the Kingdom of Christ.

(19) Moreover, Sodalities have always put aside their private interests in laboring for the common good of the Church. The unquestionable witness to this fact is the brilliant procession of militant Sodalists who have received the Church’s supreme honor of canonization. The glory of these saints adds lustre not merely to the Society of Jesus, but also to the diocesan clergy and to many religious families, ten of whose founders were Sodalists of Our Lady.

II. Sodalitys and Catholic Action

(20) The conclusion following from all these facts is clear: The Sodalitys of Our Lady, as their Church-approved Rules proclaim, are associations thoroughly filled with an apostolic spirit.²⁹ While they spur on their own members to holiness, sometimes to the very heights,³⁰ Sodalitys under the direction of their spiritual Shepherds³¹ likewise labor to bring about the Christian perfection and eternal salvation of others also and to safeguard the rights of the Church.³² Furthermore, they develop tireless servants of the Virgin Mother of God and fully-trained propagators of the Kingdom of Christ.³³

(21) In view of all the foregoing facts, Sodalitys of Our Lady in their nature, purpose, undertakings, and their accomplishments definitely fulfill every characteristic and requirement of Catholic Action. This is especially true since Catholic Action, as Our Predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, so often declared, is correctly defined: "The apostolate of the faithful who unite their efforts for the Church and to a certain extent help the Church by rounding out its pastoral office."³⁴

(22) Sodalitys of Our Lady likewise qualify with full right to be called: "Catholic Action undertaken through the Blessed Virgin Mary's constant care and inspiration."³⁵ Their structure and distinctive characteristics are no obstacle to their being so designated. In fact, just as they have in the past, so now "they are, and in the future will be, safeguarding and contributing to an eminent Catholic formation of souls."³⁶

(23) This Apostolic See has declared many times that "Catholic Action is not confined within a closed circle,"³⁷ hedged in by a set of rigid boundaries that must not be transgressed. "Catholic Action does not strive toward its goal according to a specific method and system,"³⁸ and thereby abolish or absorb other active Catholic organizations. Rather, its role is "to join them together in friendly cooperation and by a complete harmony of mind and heart and action to make the growth of one become the profit of the others."³⁹

(24) In fact, quite recently We warned that "in this excellent apostolic zeal which meets with Our highest approval, there must be avoided the error of some persons who desire to reduce to a single formula all that is done in the interest of souls."⁴⁰ This way of acting is completely alien to the mind of the Church.⁴¹

(25) Much less does the Church consider it good "to restrict the growth and flowering of life in any way"⁴² by entrusting all her apostolic works to one particular organization or to a single parish. As a matter of fact, the Church desires that all types of organizations join in these enterprises.⁴³ Under the guidance of their bishops they are to unite their

forces in brotherly cooperation and direct them toward one goal.⁴⁴ This is the "union of minds and hearts and the orderly cooperation and mutual understanding which We have recommended time and again."⁴⁵

The ease with which all such organizations will reach this unanimity depends on how sincerely they banish all arguing about priority⁴⁶ and "love one another with fraternal charity — each eager to give one another precedence"⁴⁷ and to strive only for the glory of God. They must become convinced that they will be more worthy than others the day they learn to yield others the place of honor.⁴⁸

III. Papal Summary of Sodality Fundamentals

(26) After weighing all these facts very carefully, We express as forcibly as possible Our desire that these training schools of holiness and apostolic Christian living should day by day grow stronger in life and vigor.⁴⁹ To this end, We use Our Apostolic authority to set down clearly and precisely some points that are common to Sodalities of Our Lady throughout the world and are to be observed with religious exactness by all concerned.

(27) I. The Sodalities of Our Lady duly affiliated to the *Prima Primaria* Sodality of the Roman College are religious associations established and constituted by the Church.⁵⁰ To make them more capable of accomplishing the mission entrusted to them, the Church has enriched them with many great privileges.⁵¹

(28) II. To be a lawful Sodality of Our Lady it must be erected by the Ordinary who has power to do so. In places belonging to the Society of Jesus or committed to its care they are erected by the Father General.⁵² Everywhere else they are erected by the bishop of the place, or with his formal consent, by the aforesaid Father General.⁵³

To enjoy all the Sodality privileges and indulgences, a Sodality properly erected must be duly affiliated to the *Prima Primaria*.⁵⁴ This affiliation — which may be sought only with the consent of the Ordinary of the place and which can be granted only by the General of the Society of Jesus⁵⁵ — gives neither to the *Prima Primaria* nor to the Society of Jesus any rights over such a Sodality.⁵⁶

(29) III. Sodalities of Our Lady fully comply with the pressing needs of the Church today,⁵⁷ and must therefore, in accordance with the will of the Supreme Pontiffs, keep intact their Rules, characteristics, and methods of formation.⁵⁸

(30) IV. The Common Rules, whose observance, in substantial points at least, is required before a Sodality may petition and obtain affiliation,⁵⁹ are earnestly recommended to all Sodalities as an authoritative summary

of the way of life observed by the early Sodalists and confirmed by constant practice.⁶⁰

(31) V. All Sodalities of Our Lady, no less than other organizations dedicated to the apostolate, are subject to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. The way in which they are subject is the same in all substantial points as that of other organizations but differs in non-essential matters.⁶¹

(32) VI. In propagating the Kingdom of God and defending the rights of the Church, Sodalities of Our Lady must not dissipate and weaken their forces. For this reason, Sodalists in undertaking and carrying out apostolic works must faithfully follow the example of their predecessors and hold fast to their present form and practice by keeping in mind the following points:

a. The Local Ordinary

1. according to the norms of Canon Law but without detriment to the precepts and documents of the Apostolic See, has power over absolutely all Sodalities within his jurisdiction concerning the exercise of the external apostolate;
2. has power over Sodalities erected outside of places maintained by the Society of Jesus and accordingly can give them their own rules — provided that the substantial of the Common Rules remain intact.⁶²

b. The Pastor

1. is by his office the director of parish Sodalities and governs them as well as other societies within his parish limits;
2. possesses over all the Sodalities engaged in apostolic works within his parish limits that power which has been given him by Canon Law and by diocesan statutes for the right ordering of the external apostolate.⁶³

(33) VII. The legitimately appointed director of any Sodality must always be a priest. As director, he is entirely subject to his lawful ecclesiastical Superiors. Nevertheless, in the internal life of the Sodality, he has that complete power which is set down in the Common Rules. It is fitting, however, that he should for the most part exercise this power through Sodalists chosen to help him in his office.⁶⁴

(34) VIII. These must be called Our Lady's Sodalities, since they take their name from the Blessed Virgin Mary,⁶⁵ but principally because each Sodalist professes an extra-ordinary devotion to the Mother of God⁶⁶ and unites himself to her by a complete consecration.⁶⁷ Without binding himself under pain of sin,⁶⁸ the Sodalist of Our Lady in his consecration pledges to fight with all his resources under the standard of the Blessed Virgin Mary to win Christian perfection and eternal salvation for him-

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self and for others.⁶⁹ Moreover, by this consecration the Sodalist binds himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary forever, unless he is dismissed from his Sodality as unsuitable or he himself through lack of constancy leaves it.⁷⁰

(35) IX. In the reception of Sodalists, great diligence⁷¹ should be exercised to select only those who are not at all satisfied with leading a common ordinary life,⁷² but are determined, in accordance with the ascetical norms and exercises of piety laid down in the Rules,⁷³ to fulfill even the highest "aspirations of their hearts" (Cf. Ps. 83:6).⁷⁴

(36) X. Sodalities of Our Lady must, therefore, give their members, each in accord with his condition in life, a formation that will make them capable of being proposed to their equals as examples of Christian living and apostolic zeal.⁷⁵

(37) XI. Among their primary ends,⁷⁶ Sodalities include every form of the apostolate, particularly the social apostolate, since the apostolic work of spreading the Kingdom of Christ and defending the rights of the Church⁷⁷ has been mandated to Sodalities by the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy itself.⁷⁸ In order to ensure this real and complete cooperation of Sodalities in the apostolate of the Hierarchy,⁷⁹ the Sodality Rules which have that effect are not to be modified or changed in any way.⁸⁰

(38) XII. Lastly, the Sodalities of Our Lady are to be considered on the same level as other associations dedicated to the apostolate.⁸¹ This is true even if they should federate themselves with the other associations⁸² or become closely connected with the central organization of Catholic Action.⁸³ Moreover, since it is the duty of Sodalities, under the direction and authority of their spiritual shepherds, to lend their active support to every other association, it is not necessary for individual Sodalists to become members of another organization.⁸⁴

Conclusion

(39) These matters We ordain and proclaim. We decree that this document is and forever will remain completely valid and efficacious and possess full and undiminished effect, that it fully promotes the interests of those concerned, and that it is thus to be correctly interpreted and defined. If it should happen that anything contrary to this, whether knowingly or unknowingly, be attempted by anyone whomsoever, no matter what authority, it shall henceforth be null and void — all things to the contrary notwithstanding.

(40) Given at Castel Gandolfo, near Rome, on September 27, 1948, the second centenary of the Golden Bull, *Gloriosae Dominae*, in the tenth year of Our Pontificate.

— PIUS XII, POPE

Translation from the Latin Text, cf. A.A.S., Vol. 40, p. 393.

The marginal numbers and all sub-titles were added by *Queen's Works*.

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Letter to Father Paulussen, S.J.

PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL SECRETARIATE OF THE SODALITIES OF OUR LADY

(Pope Pius XII — July 2, 1953)

Introduction

Bis Saeculari, the synthesis of Pius XII's directives for Sodalities of Our Lady (1).

Approval of World Federation

Pope desires World Federation that will bring local federations into existence throughout the world (2). Approval of Statutes of World Federation (3).

First World Sodality Congress

Pope approves first World Sodality Congress to be held in 1954 (4).

Triple Theme of Congress

Triple theme summarizes principal elements of *Bis Saeculari*, the charter for Sodalities of Our Lady, to which all these Sodalities must conform (6).

I. Greater Selectivity of Members

Only those having capacity and determination to observe Common Rules may be admitted permanently. All Sodalities must have this selectivity, which does not necessarily keep number of Sodalists small (7-9).

II. Greater Union with Hierarchy

As Catholic Action, lay Sodalities in their apostolate depend directly on hierarchy. Their very erection makes them in strict sense Catholic Action. New World Federation will promote union with hierarchy (10-11).

III. Fuller Cooperation with Other Apostolic Associations

Although Sodalities have universal apostolate mandated to them by the Church, they must continue their tradition of collaborating with other apostolic bodies (12-14).

Sodalities for Priests

Priest Sodalities form excellent priests and Sodality directors (15).

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

All Sodalists must derive apostolic spirit from the authentic Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (16).

Sodalists in Church of Silence

These Sodalists' hidden prayers, sacrifices, works contribute much toward the liberation of these people (17).

Sodalists' Hidden Work to Renew Society

Sodalists are doing much to renew parish, family, and social life according to principles of charity and justice (18). Apostolic Blessing. Date of Letter (19-20).

PAULUSSEN LETTER

Introduction

(1) All who know Our mind about the modern apostolate know, too, how highly We cherish the Sodalties of Our Lady and their continual spiritual improvement. In the Apostolic Constitution, *Bis Saeculari* (which is a synthesis of Our will about this outstanding and particular form of Catholic Action), Our Apostolic Authority determined certain guiding principles and rules by which these schools of holiness and apostolic Christian living should day by day grow stronger in life and vigor [*Bis Saeculari*, par. 26].

Approval of World Federation

(2) Do not wonder that We experience great joy and consolation on learning that the Sodalties of Our Lady, legitimately erected and affiliated to the *Prima Primaria* Sodality of the Roman College, intend to form a World Federation, and thereby all the more "think with the Church in all things" (Common Rule 33). By humbly submitting to Our continual exhortations to unite more and more and to help each other, they will in company with all similar apostolic associations of the Church Militant, achieve greater results for the salvation of souls. This World Federation, which should extend throughout the whole Catholic Church, will bring about the happy results of having federations "of the same class or locality" (Rule 68) established wherever they do not yet exist.

(3) Therefore, We very willingly approve and recommend the Statutes of the Federation, and invite all national and other federations already in existence to affiliate to this World Federation.

First World Sodality Congress

(4) Since you wish to hold the first Congress of the World Federation in Rome next year, which is the centenary of the solemn definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Our Predecessor of happy memory, Pius IX, and also the sixtieth anniversary of Our Sodality consecration, We give this Congress Our blessing and pray for complete success in the attainment of all its goals and in the carrying out of its program.

(5) To help the Congress have greater effect, We want to give you in this letter some ideas about the Congress' program.

Triple Theme of Congress

(6) The theme of the World Congress, as proposed to Us by the Central Secretariate, is: *The greater glory of God to be effected through greater selectivity of its members, a greater union with the hierarchy,*

and fuller collaboration with other apostolic associations. The subject seems to Us very opportune, since it comprises in a few words the principal elements We set forth in the Apostolic Constitution, *Bis Saeculari*. We want Sodalities to hold that Constitution as their Charter. They must have the conviction that their vitality, prosperity, and effectiveness will be in proportion to their conformity to the prescriptions of this Constitution (Address, May 3, 1951).

I. A Greater Selectivity of Members

(7) A more careful selectivity of its members is the source of every renovation, and must, therefore, be strenuously applied, especially wherever the authentic spirit is weak. Only those may be admitted to perpetual consecration who have the determination and the capacity to observe the Common Rules and thus lead a more fervent, apostolic, and militant Catholic life.

(8) Since Sodalities can be formed "for Catholics in any social class" [Common Rule 4] and are in fact to be found in all, from the highest to the lowest, selectivity, too, must be made in all without any exception.

(9) Selectivity aims at having Sodalists derive a more intense apostolic influence from the Gospel. Selectivity does not necessarily keep the number of Sodalists small. Nor does it prevent Sodalities from forming non-Sodalists, especially those of the same social condition, into larger groups adapted to their needs.

II. Greater Union with the Hierarchy

(10) Our Address to the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate [1951] clearly brought out the fact that in the exercise of the apostolate the nature of Catholic Action depends for its genuineness on the closeness of its union with the hierarchy [A.A.S., 43, p. 789]. Lay Sodalities of Our Lady should in an impressive way represent this true notion of Catholic Action, because once Sodalities are legitimately established by the hierarchy, they depend in all their apostolic works directly on the hierarchy alone. Hence, as We have often noted, by the very fact of their erection, Sodalities are with the fullest right to be called Catholic Action, and are to be considered on the same level as other forms of Catholic Action [*Bis Saeculari*, paragraph 38].

(11) The new World Federation will not hurt the close union of Sodalities of Our Lady with the hierarchy. Far from weakening this necessary bond with the Church's hierarchy, all the federations have the duty to make this bond stronger and more stable and intimate every day; and they desire to do so.

III. Fuller Cooperation with Other Apostolic Associations

(12) Mutual collaboration with other apostolic bodies must certainly be considered among the major aims of the World Federation. Therefore, We desire that the coming Congress of Sodalities of Our Lady continue the glorious traditions of past Sodalities in this matter and thereby achieve great results.

(13) Sodalities need no new mission nor any other association in order to exercise under the leadership of the hierarchy a universal apostolate, undertaken not on private initiative but mandated to them by the Church [*Bis Saeculari*, paragraph 37]. Yet out of consideration for God's greater glory, they should look for opportunities to send their Sodalists into other apostolic bodies and have them accept tasks that will not harm their own spiritual welfare or the apostolic works of their own Sodality.

(14) In conclusion, We express our great pleasure at seeing the way Sodalists do not seek their own interests but only the greater glory of God and the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Common Rules 43 and 68). They prove themselves outstanding in their intense love for the Church's pastors, in a genuine desire to cooperate with all other apostolic groups, and in the constant care given to procure, according to the norms laid down by the Church, the renewal and preservation of the true Sodality spirit and Rules. We heartily praise this pure intention toward the interests of the Church since We know full well that this spirit is eminently necessary in our time, if the apostolate of the laity, which We have so earnestly recommended, is to achieve greater effectiveness.

Sodalities for Priests

(15) We take great joy and consolation in the Sodalities of priests and seminarians. These Sodalities not only have great achievements in past centuries to testify to their painstaking service of the Church, but are also achieving much for the Church today. With great emphasis do We recommend this type of Sodality since such Sodalities are very useful both for the formation of excellent priests and for the timely preparation and instruction of future Sodality directors.

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

(16) We must not fail to say a few words, either, about all those who in obedience to Our wishes are making the authentic Spiritual Exercises. They are obediently striving to derive from this crystal-clear fountain the inspiration, light, and faculties that will impregnate their own lives with an apostolic spirit and will enable them to direct their Sodalities in a way that meets the exigencies of our day.

Sodalists in Church of Silence

(17) Sodalists living in the "Church of Silence" are certainly greatly devoted to Us and are entitled, We think, to special mention. God alone sees and most lovingly accepts their works, sacrifices, and prayers in secret. All of them who in any way suffer persecution for the sake of justice should understand that the cross offered them by Divine Providence does without a doubt contribute much to bringing life, liberation, and Christian renewal to people oppressed by such great evils.

Sodalists' Hidden Work to Renew Society

(18) Sodalists are doing many splendid works for the training and education of youth and for the restoration of parish, family, and social life. As imitators of Mary should, they do all this for the most part quietly. All Sodalists should go on acting that way, even in the face of overwhelming difficulties. Above all they should go on cultivating a highly practical filial devotedness to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, a similar dedication to the interior life, and a ready spirit of universal apostolic service, devoted especially to renewing society according to the principles of charity and social justice.

Apostolic Blessing

(19) That all this good may be achieved under the constant care and inspiration of the Blessed Virgin Mary [*Bis Saeculari*, paragraph 22], and that the World Federation and next year's Congress may bear the richest salutary fruits, from the abundance of Our heart We impart to you, beloved Son, and to all Sodality directors, Sodalists, and candidates the Apostolic Benediction.

(20) Given in Rome at St. Peter's, the 2nd day of July, on the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 1953, the 15th of Our Pontificate.

— POPE PIUS XII

World Sodality Congress Address

Introduction

September 8, 1954, Pius XII welcomed ten thousand Sodalists of 62 nations in St. Peter's Basilica, for the beginning of the first World Sodality Congress and celebration of his Diamond Jubilee as a Sodalist (1-2). Pius XII encourages Sodalists to use their Congress for a renewal of spirit (3-6).

Triple Theme of Congress

"The greater glory of God effected through greater selectivity of members, greater union with the hierarchy, and fuller collaboration with other apostolic associations" (7-8).

Importance of *Bis Saeculari*

The charter (written grant of rights and privileges) of Sodalities of Our Lady and their guarantee of permanency in their inner make-up and in their status in the Church (8-9).

I. More Careful Selection of Members

Selectivity essential for renewal of spirit. Director may admit to permanent membership only those who desire greatest possible holiness in an intense apostolic life according to austere Sodality ideal (11-18).

II. Union with Hierarchy

Sodalities, as defined in *Bis Saeculari*, are authentic Catholic Action. They form their members so that they deny selfish interests and concentrate on helping hierarchy in its divine mission. (19-24).

III. Fuller Cooperation with Other Apostolic Associations

Sodalities called up to manifest an extraordinary apostolic spirit and love similar to that of the first Christian community. Pope's prayer that Mary will pour cooperative spirit of that community into Sodalists' hearts (25-30). Apostolic Blessing (31).

Introduction

(1) We take great joy this evening in welcoming the thousands of Sodalists of Our Lady who have just arrived in Rome and have come together here for the first session of their World Federation. May Mary Immaculate, whose joyous birthday the Church commemorates today, be favorable to you, my dear sons and daughters, who have come to this Congress from all over the world. May she bless your unity and give you a great increase in fervor.

(2) We wish to tell you first of all how deeply Our heart is touched by the homage you have given Us, both by your prayers and by the gifts that accompany them, for We know that they are signs of your faith and heartfelt affection. With delicate thoughtfulness, too, you desire to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of Our own consecration as a Sodalist. We wish to thank you for that also.

(3) In this Marian Year you find yourselves standing on the very spot

where, on December 8th, 1854, Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius IX, amid the universal joy of all Christians, proclaimed the Catholic Church's infallible belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. You, dear Sodalists, consecrated as you are to the Most Blessed Virgin, could not have failed to celebrate this holy centenary in a special way.

(4) Your journeying here is not simply an act of filial devotedness. It manifests again your determination always to advance yet farther along the path that leads to Christian perfection, which is the goal of your efforts.

(5) We, on Our part, shall give you words of encouragement and directives that will enable you to attain a fuller realization of your ideal of devotedness and apostolic work.

(6) The Congress that begins today should be the starting point of a renewal of spirit in all the Sodalities throughout the world.

Triple Theme of Congress

(7) The Congress has for its theme: The greater glory of God effected through greater selectivity of members; greater union with the hierarchy; and fuller collaboration with other apostolic associations.

(8) We have already had occasion to write to the Director of your Central Secretariate to the effect that this program seems to Us to be an excellent one. It sums up in a few words the principal directives that We stated in Our Apostolic Constitution, *Bis Saeculari*.

Importance of Bis Saeculari

This document, to which We gave the solemn form it bears because We wanted to emphasize its importance, sets forth the obligations and prerogatives of the Sodalities of Our Lady affiliated with the Prima Primaria of the Roman College.

(9) We want it to remain the charter of these Sodalities and at the same time to give permanency to the inner make-up of these Sodalities and to their status in the Church.

(10) Today We are going to lay stress on only the three points of your program which We recalled a moment ago: greater selection; union with the hierarchy; cooperation in the apostolate.

I. More Careful Selection of Members

(11) The first of these is essential to secure and to guarantee the renovation of spirit We desire.

(12) Sodalities are not simply religious associations. They are also schools of perfection and of the apostolate. They make an appeal not to Christians who are content with doing only a little more than is necessary, but to those who are determined to respond generously to the attractions of grace and to seek out God's will and fulfill it in their state of life.

(13) That is why no one may be admitted into their ranks merely on the strength of some traditional custom or other, or for the purpose of bestowing the honor of his presence on them or of gaining some dignity and prestige for himself. One thing alone is to be taken into account: the candidate's desire for the greatest possible holiness and for a Christian life that radiates about it personal fervor and apostolic zeal.

(14) Let the members of the council who have been asked to give their advice in this matter, and above all let the director, on whom alone rests the responsibility for admitting candidates, seriously consider these essential points.

(15) A candidate's fitness will be evidenced by his faithfulness in attending meetings, his taste for a life of prayer, his reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist; in a word, by the way he labors unflaggingly to grow in the love of God which is the foundation of zeal for souls.

(16) As a matter of fact, this zeal demands a supernatural strength if it is to persevere and bear fruit. Faith, hope, and charity are the outgrowth neither of a happy temperament nor of spontaneous self-effort. They are divine gifts which you must beg of God with humility and constancy and which you must develop with care.

(17) The man who aspires to be a genuine Sodalist, one worthy of the name, plunges headlong into the struggle against his lower tendencies. He is resolved to make a clean break with sin. He holds up before himself the goal of an ever more faithful imitation of Jesus, the Son of Man Who is meek and humble of heart. Like Christ his soul is afire to accomplish the Father's least wishes and to please Him in every way despite every obstacle to the contrary.

(18) Dear sons and daughters, may this captivating and austere ideal live in each of you! It is the origin of the most astounding renewals of spirit! It is the support of an endeavor that is as silent and unhurried as the flow of life, but as irresistible as the workings of God Himself.

II. Union with the Hierarchy

(19) Union with the hierarchy, the manifest sign of loyal attachment to Christ, will be another touchstone of the sincerity of one's zeal. The

reason why We have insisted on ranking the Sodalities of Our Lady as they are defined in *Bis Saeculari* among the most authentic forms of Catholic Action is that they labor of set purpose to have their members make the mind of the Church their own. *sentire cum Ecclesia* [to be of one mind with the Church]. This is the only fit attitude for anyone who lays claim to collaborating with the hierarchy in its apostolic labors.

(20) The hierarchy is responsible for God's glory on earth and is entrusted with divine powers. Hence it is the hierarchy who assigns a particular task to every volunteer offering himself to carry on the work of Christ. The hierarchy will not receive really competent help from already existing institutions and from new enterprises if these merely submit themselves externally to the hierarchy for its approval. It is more important for these to enter into the spirit of the hierarchy, grasp its intentions, and anticipate its desires.

(21) Such action presupposes humility and obedience, devotedness and self-denial. These are solid virtues, ones that the Sodalities in their solid method of formation never fail to develop in their members. Fired with the desire to serve without counting the cost, Sodalists never seek to be a race apart. Nor do they stake out certain sectors of the vineyard and claim them as their exclusive domain. On the contrary they are ready to go to work at whatever job the hierarchy assigns them.

(22) Sodalists do not serve the Church as if she were some foreign power or a merely human family. No, they serve her as the Spouse of Christ who is inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit Himself and whose interests are at one with Christ's own.

(23) It hurt the Apostle St. Paul to report that certain people — in his disappointment he said "all" — "have their own interests at heart, not Christ's" (Phil. 2:21).

(24) May his warning put you on guard! Forget yourselves! Be quick to reject any tendency toward narrowness of vision. Accept whatever assignments the Church gives you as though they came directly from your divine Commander Himself. Do this and you will be able to say with the Apostle, "Thus when the day of Christ comes, I shall be able to boast of a life not spent in vain, of labors not vainly undergone" (Phil. 2:16).

III. Fuller Cooperation with Other Apostolic Associations

(25) The theme of your Congress also proposes fuller cooperation with other apostolic organizations. In addition to its practical aspect this uniting of energies is an unmistakable sign of Christ's presence in the midst of all those who in action and in prayer obey one and the same inspiration. In His sacerdotal prayer Our Lord begged of His Father with great insistence "that all may be one, even as Thou, Father, in Me

and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me" (John 17:21).

(26) The apostolate is a way of sharing in Jesus' divine mission. Thereby men are shown the love of the Father and the Son for them, a love manifested by the Father's and the Son's gift of their only Spirit. Without a doubt you recall how the Acts of the Apostles lay stress on the extraordinary union that was the fruit of the Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost. "Now the multitude of the believers were of one heart and one soul, and not one of them said that anything he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord; and great grace was in them all" (Acts 4:32-33).

(27) This apostolic radiance which was so extraordinary in the first Christian community has been repeated again and again in various ways throughout the Church's history, especially at times of crisis. At such hours only the vigorous energy of youthful forces armed with unwavering convictions and built on that one and only enthusiasm were able to overcome obstacles that seemed unsurmountable. Is this not the kind of testimony that our time is waiting for in a most special way from you?

(28) A great number of generous enterprises scatter their energies over wide and divergent fields of action. They are ignorant of each other, and sometimes, alas, even fight among themselves. In the meantime the forces of evil pursue their conquest without truce and penetrate everywhere because of good men's lack of mutual alliance and coordination of effort.

(29) In the Church's infancy Mary's powerful intercession merited for the Christian community at Jerusalem a perfect harmony of love. We earnestly hope that the Queen of Apostles will likewise pour a spirit of sincere collaboration into your hearts today, dear sons and daughters gathered here, and throughout the whole world into the hearts of your fellow Sodalists whom you represent before Us. May We be able to say to you, reversing the words of St. Paul We just quoted: "All have not their own interests at heart but only those of Jesus Christ."

(30) Such is Our wish for you as We come to the end of Our remarks. May Mary deign to protect this spirit and make it bear fruit in all of the places to which you will be returning, so that you carry away from Rome and this Congress the remembrance of the inspiration of Pentecost and the determination to respond generously to the great graces you have received through the patronage of Mary Immaculate.

(31) As a token of the divine good will that Our most fervent prayers implore for you, We grant to you yourselves, dear sons and daughters, to each of your Sodalities, to each of your National Federations and to your World Federation the most heartfelt and fatherly Apostolic Blessing.

Pope's Talk To Teen-Age Sodalists

On August 29, 1953, Pope Pius XII addressed a group of sodalists from St. Vincent High School, Rennes, France, His speech was so definitive for teenage sodalists everywhere that we bring it to the attention of Sodalists in our land.

Welcome to your Father's house! You already know how much We love the Sodalities of Our Lady and how highly We value the serious spiritual formation they give their members. Such assurance has given you a desire to hear from Our own lips, in Rome itself, an approval of your striving for Christian perfection in the Sodality of Our Lady, which in full right is so dear to you.

We are sure that you have read the Constitution, *Bis Saeculari*, of September 27, 1948, and have heard explanations of it. In that Constitution We confirm the praises and privileges which Our predecessors so often granted to the Sodalities of Our Lady. We know that this Constitution has given new life to more than one Sodality.

The sight of you so eager for encouragement and guidance inspires Us to state once more that the Sodalities of Our Lady are always modern and productive. Yes, they are well qualified to attract generous hearts because they demand much. Moreover, they are animated by a continually purer and deeper spirit of the Gospel. They are well organized and have excellent rules, which are both exact and flexible and are based on an accurate understanding of human nature and the spiritual life.

When you prove yourself faithful to Sodality traditions and methods, you are certain of responding to the wishes of the Church and imbibing a truly Catholic spirit. The Sodality of Our Lady fully respects the Christian order of values. It highly treasures and methodically cultivates, safeguards and develops, before all else, the interior life, a life of prayer and spiritual combat fought under the gaze of the Immaculate, a life of obedience and humility after the example of the Handmaid of the Lord, a life of joy and charity in the spirit of the Magnificat and the Visitation.

Action, without which there is no true Sodality of Our Lady, must overflow from an intense interior life. In a concrete manner, action must express a charity of supernatural origin, a charity that is devoted, patient, and makes an imprint on the neighbor's soul. You have much of that, God be praised, because you are genuine Sodalists of the Most Holy Virgin.

You are fortunate to belong to a spiritual family that has so many heroes and saints. Consider it a choice grace that, at the present time

TEEN-AGE SODALISTS

when your personality is forming and asserting itself, you find a lofty and chivalrous ideal and at the same time a solid and sure plan for attaining the ideal. A good beginning helps the entire course and insures progress through all difficulties. Nothing can stop it.

Whatever may be the place and the role that God reserves for you in society and in the Church, always have the courage to use generously the talent which He has given you, according to the spirit and the practices of the Sodality of Our Lady. That wish for you We entrust to the Most Holy Virgin, and at the same time We grant you and those who direct your Sodality, and your parents and teachers, and finally all those who are dear to you, Our paternal apostolic blessing.

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