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009 - Russia and the Immaculate Heart

Pius XII

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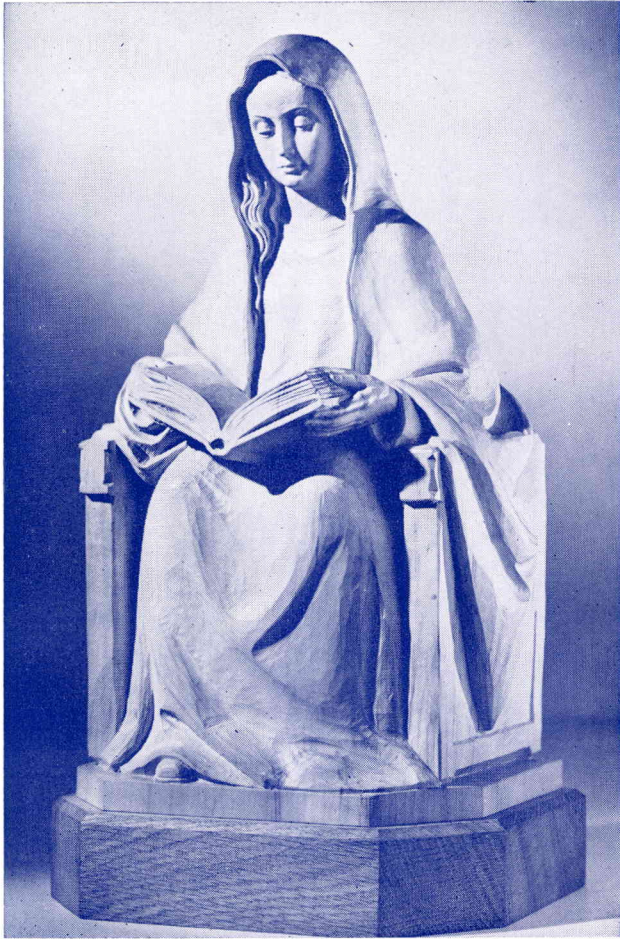


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Russia and the Immaculate Heart

Apostolic Letter of Pius XII Addressed to All the Peoples of Russia

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . .

On July 7, 1952, the feast of SS. Cyril and Methodius, apostles to the Slavs, Pope Pius XII addressed an unprecedented apostolic letter directly to the Russian people ("the dearly beloved peoples of Russia") in which he consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

This consecration, which Our Lady promised would lead to world peace, was first requested in 1917 by Our Lady of the Rosary in the third of her six appearances to the three shepherd children at Fatima. At that time, the Blessed Virgin told the children:

"But finally my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, Russia will be converted and there will be a certain period of peace."

Our Lady repeated her request for the consecration of Russia in 1929. In 1942, Pope Pius XII consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart, with a special mention of Russia. In his book, *Vision of Fatima*, Father Thomas McGlynn, O.P., tells us that Lucy did not consider this the consecration required.

"Did the Holy Father consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart?" I asked Irma Does (Lucy).

"He included Russia in the consecration," she said. Then, very humbly, as if wishing that she were wrong, she added, "In the official way that Our Lady asked for? I don't think so."

Father Gardiner, wishing to make certain of this point, reframed the question, "Do you think that Our Lady's request has been complied with?"

Irma Does replied: "As Our Lady made it, no." But she added, "Whether Our Lady accepted the consecration made in 1942 as fulfilling her wish, I don't know." (*Vision of Fatima*, p. 80).

In 1943 it is reported that Our Lord appeared to Lucy and indicated His pleasure with the consecration, but also noted that it was incomplete.

In the Apostolic Letter of July, 1942, the Pope has consecrated the Russian peoples to the Immaculate Heart of Mary "in a most special way," urging them to resist, if necessary to death, the "assaults of the impious."

This document, then, is the long-awaited fulfillment of a Fatima request. Its importance is such that it would seem to indicate a significant milestone in the history of the message of Fatima.

(published with ecclesiastical approval)

Russia and the Immaculate Heart

APOSTOLIC LETTER OF PIUS PP. XII

TO THE DEARLY BELOVED PEOPLES OF RUSSIA:

HEALTH AND PEACE IN THE LORD

As the Holy Year was coming to a successful close, when, by divine disposition, it had been given Us to define solemnly the Dogma of the Assumption, soul and body, into heaven of the great Mother of God, the Virgin Mary very many persons from all parts of the world expressed to Us their heartfelt joy. Among these there were some who, in sending Us letters of thanks, pleaded with insistence that We should consecrate the entire Russian people, in the difficulties of the present moment, to the Immaculate Heart of the same Virgin Mary.

This request was exceedingly acceptable to Us because if Our paternal affection embraces all peoples, it is directed in an especial manner to those who, though for the most part separated from this Apostolic See as a result of the vicissitudes of history, retain nevertheless the Christian name, and find themselves in such conditions that not only is it extremely difficult for them to hear Our voice and know the teachings of Catholic doctrine, but they are being compelled by guileful and evil wiles to reject even the Faith and the very idea of God.

As soon as We had been raised to the Supreme Pontificate, Our thoughts turned to you who constitute an immense people, so greatly renowned in history for glorious undertakings, for love of your fatherland, for industriousness and thrift, for piety toward God and the Virgin Mary.

We have never ceased to raise Our supplications to God that he may always assist you with His heavenly light and with His divine aid, and that He would grant each and every one of you to enjoy, together with just and reasonable material prosperity, that liberty also, through which every one of you may be in a position to safeguard your human dignity, know the teachings of true religion and give due worship to God, not only in the inner sanctuary of your own conscience but also openly, in the exercise of public and private life.

SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS

Besides, you are well aware that, whenever a possibility was offered, Our predecessors held nothing dearer than to show you their benevolence and extend to you their aid. You know that the Apostles of the western Slavs, Saints Cyril and Methodius, who together with the Christian religion brought civilization, also, to the ancestors of these people, directed their steps toward this city, so that the work of their apostolate might be strengthened by the authority of the Roman Pontiffs.

And while they are making their entry into Rome, Our predecessor Hadrian II of happy memory "accompanied by the clergy and people, goes to meet them with a great display of honor" (Leo XII, Encyclical Letter "Grande Munus," A.L. Vol. 2, pag. 129) and after having approved and praised their work, not only raised them to the episcopate but chose to consecrate them Bishops himself, with the full solemn majesty of sacred rites.

As for your forebears, on every occasion that circumstances allowed, the Roman Pontiffs sought to enter into and consolidate friendly relations with them. Thus, in the year 977, Our predecessor, Benedict VII, of happy memory, sent legates to Prince Jaropolk, brother of the famous Vladimir. And to the same great Prince Vladimir, under whose auspices the Christian name and civilization shone forth for the first time among your people, legations were sent by Our predecessors John IV in 991, and by Sylvester II in 999.

This was courteously reciprocated by the same Vladimir who, in turn, sent legates to the same Roman Pontiffs. It is worthy of note that at the time when this prince brought these peoples to the religion of Jesus Christ, Eastern and Western Christianity were united under the authority of the Roman Pontiff as supreme head of the entire Church. Furthermore, few years later, namely in 1075, your Prince Isjaslav sent his own son Jaropolk to the Supreme Pontiff Gregory VII.

And this Our predecessor of immortal memory thus wrote to this prince and his consort: "Your son, while visiting the sacred remains of the Apostles, came to us, and since he wished to receive that kingdom from our hands as a gift of St. Peter, having made a profession of fidelity to

St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, requested it with devout supplications, stating unhesitatingly that this request would be ratified and confirmed by you whenever he would have obtained the favor of protection by Apostolic authority. As these wishes and requests seemed lawful, both by reason of your consent and the devotion of the petitioner, we finally granted them, and we have consigned him, on behalf of St. Peter, the government of your kingdom, with this intention and this ardent desire that Blessed Peter, through his intercession with God, may guard you, your kingdom and all your affairs, and may grant you to possess that kingdom in all peace and with honor and glory to the end of your life."

ISIDORE, METROPOLITAN OF KIEV

Likewise, it is to be noted and held in highest consideration that Isidore, Metropolitan of Kiev, in the Ecumenical Council of Florence, added his signature to the decree by which the unity of the Eastern and Western Church, under the authority of the Roman Pontiff, was solemnly sanctioned, and this for his whole ecclesiastical province, that is, for the entire kingdom of Russia. And to this ratification of unity he, insofar as it concerned him, remained faithful until the end of his earthly life.

And if in the meantime and later, by reason of a combination of adverse circumstances, communications from the one as from the other side became more difficult, and as a consequence the union of souls more difficult—although until 1448 there is no public document which declares your Church separated from the Apostolic See—yet that, for the most part, is not to be attributed to the Slavic people nor certainly Our predecessors, who always surrounded those people with paternal love, and when it was possible took care to sustain and aid them in every way.

We pass over not a few other historical documents from which the benevolence of Our predecessors toward your nation appears, but We cannot fail to call attention briefly to what was done by the Supreme Pontiffs Benedict XV and Pius XI, when, after the first European conflict, especially in the southern regions of your country, great multitudes of men, women, innocent boys and girls were struck by a most devastating famine and by extreme misery.

They, indeed, impelled by a paternal affection for your fellow countrymen, sent to these peoples foodstuffs, clothing and a large amount of

money collected from the entire Catholic world, in order to come to the aid of all those who were hungry and in distress, and to alleviate in some way their calamities.

Not only for their material but also for their spiritual necessities did Our predecessors seek, according to their possibilities, to provide. When, indeed, your religious situation was upset and disturbed because the enemies of God were trying to eradicate from souls faith and the very notion of a Supreme Being, they not only elevated fervent supplications to God—the Father of mercy and fount of every consolation (II Cor. 1, 2)—but they ordained that public prayers should be offered up as well.

PRAYERS IN COMMON FOR RUSSIA

Thus the Supreme Pontiff Pius XI, in 1930, established that on the day of the Feast of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, “there should be raised to God prayers in common . . . in the Vatican Basilica for the unhappy conditions of religion in Russia” (Acta Apostolicae Sedis 1930, pag. 300) and he himself wished to be present, surrounded by the huge and pious multitude of people.

Besides, in a solemn consistorial allocution he exhorted all with these words: “It is necessary to pray to Christ . . . Redeemer of the human race, to grant that peace and liberty to profess the Faith may be restored to the afflicted people of Russia . . . and we wish that for this intention, that is for Russia, those prayers should be offered up, whose recital by priest and people after Mass was ordained by our predecessor Leo XIII of happy memory. Let Bishops and the secular and religious clergy with all solicitude bring this to the attention of their faithful and to all those assisting at Holy Mass, and often recall it to their minds.” (Ibid. pag. 301.)

We willingly confirm and renew this exhortation and this command, since the religious situation among you up to the present is certainly not improved, and since We are animated by the same most ardent affection and by the same concern for the peoples of Russia.

When the last long and terrible conflict broke out, We did all that was within Our power, with words, with exhortations and with action, that discords might be healed with an equitable and just peace, and that all peoples, without difference of origin, might unite in friendly and fraternal

concord and work together for the attainment of a greater prosperity.

NO APPROVAL OF WAR AGAINST RUSSIA

Never, even at that time, did there come from Our lips a word that could have seemed to any of the belligerents to be unjust or harsh. We certainly reproached, as was Our duty, every iniquity and every violation of rights, but We did this in such a way as to avoid with all diligence whatever might become, even unjustly, an occasion for the greater affliction of oppressed peoples. And when pressure was brought to bear upon Us to give Our approval in some way, either verbally or in writing, to the war undertaken against Russia in 1941, We never consented to do so, as We stated clearly on February 25, 1946, in Our allocution to the Sacred College of Cardinals and to all diplomatic representatives accredited to the Holy See. (cf. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1946, pag. 154.)

When there is a question of defending the cause of religion, of truth, of justice and of Christian civilization, We certainly cannot remain silent; but Our thoughts and Our intentions have always been directed to this end: namely, that peoples be governed not by force of arms but by the majesty of the law, and that each people, enjoying civil and religious liberty within the confines of its own country, should be led toward concord, peace and that productive life whereby all citizens can procure what is necessary for their nourishment, their dwellings, and for the support and upbringing of their families.

Our words and our exhortations concerned and concern all nations, and therefore you too, who are ever present in Our heart and whose necessities and calamities We desire to alleviate insofar as We can. Those who love truth and not falsehood know that during the course of the recent conflict We remained impartial toward all contestants and often gave proof of Our impartiality by Our words and actions. They know also that We have embraced with Our most ardent charity all nations, even those whose rulers are professedly enemies of this Apostolic See, and those, too, in which enemies of God fiercely combat and try to erase from the minds of their citizens all that is Christian and divine.

Indeed, by command of Jesus Christ, Who entrusted the entire flock of the Christian people to St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, (cf. John 21,

15-17)—whose unworthy successor We are—We love all peoples with an intense affection and We desire to promote the earthly happiness and eternal salvation of all. All, therefore, whether engaged in armed conflict with each other, or threateningly contending and menacingly disputing over their grave differences, are looked upon by us as so many very dear children; and We desire nothing more, We ask nothing more for them in our prayers to God than mutual concord, just and true peace and ever increasing prosperity.

HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE PAPACY

And if some peoples, because deceived by lies and calumnies, profess open hostility toward Us, We cherish for them a greater pity and a more ardent love. Undoubtedly We have condemned and rejected, as the duty of Our office demands, the errors which the promoters of atheistic communism teach and try to propagate to the greatest detriment and misfortune of the citizens; but the persons who are in error, not only do We not turn them away, but We desire that they should return to truth and to the right path.

In fact, We have unmasked and disproved those lies which were often being presented under a false semblance of truth, precisely because We cherish for you a paternal affection and seek to promote your good. For We know for certain that those errors can only cause you greatest harm, because not merely do they deprive your souls of that supernatural light and those supreme comforts which derive from piety and from the worship of God, but they rob you as well of your human dignity and of the freedom that is due to citizens.

We know that there are very many among you who still preserve their Christian Faith within the innermost sanctuary of their consciences, who in no way allow themselves to be induced to help the enemies of religion, and, moreover, whose ardent desire is to profess Christian teaching—the one safe foundation of civilized life—not only in private but if possible also openly, as becomes free men.

We know furthermore—and knowledge has filled Our heart with hope and with deepest comfort—that you love and honor the Virgin Mother of God with ardent affection and that you venerate her sacred images. It is

known that in the Kremlin itself there was constructed a church—today unfortunately no longer being used for divine worship—dedicated to Our Lady assumed into Heaven; and this is a most clear testimony of the affectionate devotion which your forebearers and you have for the Beloved Mother of God.

Now We are well aware that the hope of salvation can never be absent wherever hearts are turned with sincere and ardent piety to the most holy Mother of God. Though attempts be made by men, no matter how powerful or impious, to root out from the minds of the citizenry holy religion and Christian virtue, and though Satan himself may strive with every means to foster this sacrilegious struggle—as is described in the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles: “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and the powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places” (Eph. VI, 12)—yet notwithstanding, when Mary interposes her powerful protection, the gates of hell cannot prevail.

She, in fact, is the most loving and most powerful Mother of God and of Us all, and never was it heard in the world that anyone has had suppliant recourse to her and has not experienced her most efficacious protection. Continue, therefore, as you have been doing, to venerate her with fervent piety, and to love her ardently and to invoke her with these words which you have been accustomed to address to her: “To you alone has it been given, O most holy and most pure Mother of God, unfailingly to have your prayers heard.”

We, together with you, are raising to her Our suppliant invocations, that the Christian Faith, which is the honor and support of human society, may be strengthened and increased among the peoples of Russia, and that all the wiles of the enemies of religion, all their errors and their deceptive artifices may be driven off far from you; that public and private conduct may return to conformity with the teachings of the Gospels; that those especially who among you profess themselves as Catholics, although deprived of their pastors, may resist with fearless fortitude the assaults of the impious, if necessary even unto death; that just liberty, which is the right of the human person, of citizen and of Christians, may be restored to all as is fitting, and in the first place to the Church, which has the divine

mandate of teaching to all men truth and virtue; and finally that true peace may come with its shining light to your beloved nation and to all throughout the world, and that this peace, founded securely upon justice and nourished by fraternal charity, may lead all mankind to that common prosperity of citizens and peoples which is the fruit of mutual concord.

May our most loving Mother be pleased to look with clemency also upon those who are organizing the ranks of militant atheists and upon those who are collaborating in furthering such initiatives, that she may deign to obtain for their minds that light which comes from on high and direct their hearts through divine grace into salvation.

In order that Our and your prayers be more readily answered, and to give you an especial attestation of Our particular affection, We, therefore, just as not many years ago We consecrated the entire world to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mother of God, so now, in a most special way, **WE DEDICATE AND CONSECRATE ALL PEOPLES OF RUSSIA TO THAT SAME IMMACULATE HEART**, in confident assurance, that through the most powerful protection of Virgin Mary there may at the earliest moment be happily realized the hopes and desires which We together with you and with all those of upright intention have for the attainment of true peace, of fraternal concord and of rightful liberty for all: in the first place for the Church, so that through the mediation of the prayer which We raise to Heaven in union with you and with all Christian peoples, the saving Kingdom of Christ, which is "A Kingdom of truth and of life, Kingdom of Sanctity and of grace, Kingdom of justice, of love and of peace" (preface of the Feast of the Kingship of Jesus Christ) may triumph and be firmly established in every part of the world.

And with suppliant appeal We pray the same most loving Mother that she may assist each and every one of you in the present calamitous circumstances and obtain from her Divine Son heavenly light for your minds, and for your souls that virtue and fortitude by which, with sustaining divine grace, you may be able victoriously to overcome impiety and error.

Given at Rome, from St. Peter's, July 7, 1952, the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, in the fourteenth year of Our Pontificate.

Pius PP XII.



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