



# The Holy See

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## *ORIENTALES OMNES ECCLESIAS*

### ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS XII

#### ON THE THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REUNION OF THE RUTHENIAN CHURCH WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE TO THE VENERABLE BRETHREN, THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS, AND OTHER ORDINARIES IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE

1. All the Eastern Churches, as history proves, have ever been the object of the deep affection of the Roman pontiffs, who, grieving as deeply over their leaving the one fold and "not for any human motive, but impelled by divine charity and a desire for the salvation of all,"[1] have again and again called upon them to return speedily to the unity which they had unhappily abandoned. They were absolutely convinced that if this union were happily restored the most fruitful consequences would result both for the whole of Christendom and for the orientals in particular; for the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ and all its members cannot but greatly benefit from the full and perfect unity of all Christians.

2. In this connection it should be borne in mind that the orientals need have no fear at all of being compelled to abandon their lawful rites and customs if unity of faith and government is restored; our predecessors have more than once made this absolutely clear. "Nor is there any reason for you to fear on that account that we or any of our successors will ever diminish your rights, the privileges of your patriarchs, or the established ritual of any one of your churches."[2]

3. The happy day has not yet come on which, all the peoples of the East returning to the fold, we should be able to embrace them all with the affection of the father. Nonetheless we have the happiness of seeing not a few of our sons from those countries; these, since they have recognized the Chair of Peter as the center of Catholic unity, persevere with the greatest tenacity in defending and strengthening this same unity.

4. Among them there is special reason why it pleases us to speak at present of the Church of the

Ruthenians; not only is it outstanding for the number of its members and its zeal in retaining the faith, but also this is the three hundred and fiftieth year since it was happily restored to communion with the Apostolic See. It is, indeed, especially incumbent on those directly involved to celebrate this happy event in a spirit of gratitude, but we think it opportune also to recall it to the memory of all Catholics, so that they may ceaselessly give thanks to God for this great blessing, and also may join with us in earnest prayer that He would mercifully ease and alleviate the present distress and apprehension of this beloved people, would protect its most holy region, direct its constancy and preserve its faith unharmed.

5. We think it will be useful if in this letter we give a brief historical summary of the events with which we are concerned. It must be observed in the first place that even before the union of the Ruthenians with the Apostolic See was happily concluded at Rome and confirmed at Brest in 1595 and 1596, these people had more than once looked to the Roman Church as the one mother of the whole Christian community and dutifully paid it due obedience and reverence. Thus, for instance, the noble prince who is revered by the numberless peoples of the Russian empire as the author and promoter of their conversion to the Christian faith, St. Vladimir, borrowed liturgical rites and sacred ceremonies from the Eastern Church; but he not only dutifully persevered in the unity of the Catholic Church, but also took pains to establish friendly relations between his nation and the Apostolic See. Not a few of his descendants also received the legates of the Roman pontiffs with due honor and were fraternally united with other Catholic communities, even after the Church of Constantinople was separated by the lamentable schism.

6. It follows that the action of the metropolitan Isidore of Kiev and the Russians was in harmony with the most ancient tradition of the Ruthenian Church when, in 1439, at the ecumenical council of Florence he signed the decree which solemnly united the Greek to the Latin Church. Nevertheless upon his return from the council, although he was joyfully welcomed at Kiev, his titular see, shortly afterwards at Moscow he was cast into prison and compelled to take to flight and leave the country.

7. However, although it might well have been totally blotted out on account of the sorry conditions of the period, the memory of this happy union of the Ruthenians with the Apostolic See was not wholly lost with the passage of time. For example in 1458 Gregory Mammias, patriarch of Constantinople, in this holy city, consecrated a certain Gregory as metropolitan of the Ruthenians, who were then subject to the grand duke of Lithuania; and again, more than one of the successors of this metropolitan strove to restore the bond of unity with the Roman Church, although adverse circumstances did not permit the solemn public promulgation of union.

8. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, however, it became daily more obvious that there was no hope of achieving the desired renewal and reform of the Ruthenian Church, which was then borne down by grave abuses, except by restoring union with the Apostolic See. Even dissident historians describe and freely admit the wretched state this Church was then in. In 1585 the

Ruthenian nobles, meeting together in Warsaw, asserted, in the course of a sharp and vivid exposition to the metropolitan of their grievances, that their Church was plagued by greater evils than had ever previously existed or could ever be in the future. These nobles did not hesitate to arraign the metropolitan himself, the bishops and the superiors of monasteries, bringing serious charges against them. The mere fact that laymen should thus rise up against the hierarchy made it evident that ecclesiastical discipline was not a little relaxed.

9. It is not surprising therefore that the bishops themselves, after vainly trying various remedies, concluded that the only hope for the Ruthenian Church lay in bringing about its return to Catholic unity. At that time the most powerful man among the Ruthenians was prince Constantine Ostrozhsy and he was in favor of this return, but only on condition that the whole Eastern Church should come to an agreement with the Western; later, when he saw that the plan was not going to be carried out in the way he desired, he became a violent opponent of the restoration of unity. None the less, on 2nd December 1594, the metropolitan and six bishops, after taking counsel together, published a joint declaration in which they proclaimed themselves ready to promote agreement and the long desired union. We have come to this determination, they wrote, "from the consideration, full of sadness for us, of how great are the hindrances men find in the way of salvation in the absence of this union of the Churches of God. From the time of Christ our Savior and his holy apostles, as the canons and councils make clear, our predecessors long continued in this union; they acknowledged one supreme pastor and first bishop in the Church of God on earth, no other than the holy pope of Rome, and obeyed him in all things. While this state of affairs remained in its vigor there was ever order in the Church of God and increase of divine worship." [3]

10. However, long and difficult negotiations were necessary before they could give effect to this praiseworthy determination. A new declaration of the same kind was first issued in the name of all the bishops on 22nd June 1595, and at length towards the end of September such progress had been made that Cyril Terletsy, bishop of Lutsk, and Hypatius Pociei, bishop of Vladimir were able to set out for Rome as representatives of all the rest of the bishops. They took with them on this journey a document setting out the conditions on which all the Ruthenian bishops were ready to embrace the unity of the Church. Our predecessor Clement VIII received them very benevolently and committed the document they had brought to a committee of cardinals for careful examination and approval. Discussions of the whole matter began at once and finally reached the desired happy result. On 23rd December 1595 the emissaries were admitted to the presence of the supreme pontiff; they read the declaration of all the bishops before the illustrious assembly and then in their own name and that of the other bishops made a solemn profession of faith and promised due obedience and respect.

11. On the same day our predecessor Clement VIII joyfully communicated the news of this happy event to the world by the Apostolic constitution *Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis*. [4] How great was the joy and goodwill with which the Roman Church welcomed the Ruthenian people on their reception into the unity of the fold may be seen also from the Apostolic Letter *Benedictus sit*

*Pastor*, issued on 7th February 1596, in which the supreme pontiff informed the metropolitan and the other Ruthenian bishops of the happy establishment of the union of their whole Church with the Apostolic See. In this letter the Roman pontiff briefly set forth what had been done in the matter at Rome; he gratefully extolled the work they had by God's mercy at length undertaken, and then decreed that the legitimate uses and rites of the Ruthenian Church could be preserved inviolate. "In the same manner as the council of Florence permitted, we too permit you to retain your rites and ceremonies, which in no way injure the integrity of the Catholic faith or our union." [5] He goes on to say that he has asked the king of Poland to extend the protection of his patronage to the bishops and all appertaining to them, and also to pay them the fullest honor and, as they desired, to admit them to the senate of the kingdom. Finally he fraternally exhorts the bishops to meet as soon as possible in a full provincial council to ratify and confirm the union of the Ruthenians with the Catholic Church.

12. This council was held at Brest. There were present, besides all the Ruthenian bishops, many other ecclesiastics and representatives of the king, the Latin bishops of Lvov, Lutsk and Chelm as papal legates. The bishops of Lvov and Przemysl unhappily withdrew the consent they had previously given, but in spite of this on 8th October 1596 the union of the Ruthenian community with the Catholic Church was happily confirmed and proclaimed. It was the general hope that this union and association, which answered so perfectly the needs of the Ruthenian people, would be abundantly fruitful of good.

13. However, "an enemy came and scattered tares among the wheat"; [6] whether the cause was the greed of some of the nobles, or political quarrels, or that the previous instruction and preparation of clergy and people in the matter had been neglected, there followed sharp conflicts and protracted calamities, so that there was cause to fear that the work so happily begun would be utterly destroyed.

14. That this did not befall at the very outset on account of calumnies and dissensions, in which not only the dissident brethren but also some Catholics took part, was chiefly due to the metropolitans Hypatius Pociel and Joseph Velamin Rutsky. They were indefatigable in their efforts to protect and promote the cause of the union; in particular they brought it about that priests and the members of monasteries should conform to ecclesiastical law and the requirements of good morals, and that all the faithful should be instructed in the virtuous ordinances of the true faith.

15. This work of conciliation was consecrated not many years later by the blood of martyrdom. Josaphat Kuntzevitch, archbishop of Polotsk and Vitebsk, was famed for his holiness of life and apostolic zeal, and was an intrepid champion of Catholic unity. He was hunted down with bitter hatred and murderous intent by the schismatics and on 12th November 1623 he was inhumanly wounded and slain with a halberd. But the hallowed blood of this martyr too became in a manner the seed of the Church, for all the parricides save one, repenting of their deed, renounced schism and execrated their crime before they were put to death. It may also be attributed to the prayers of

the holy martyr that Melety Smotritzky, who had been the bitter rival of Josaphat for possession of the see of Polotsk, returned to the Catholic faith in 1627 and, after a period of vacillation, for the rest of his life stoutly defended the return of the Ruthenians to the Catholic Church.

16. Nonetheless the difficulties of every kind hindering reconciliation increased from year to year. The most serious of these was that the kings of Poland, who at first were regarded as patrons and promoters of the scheme, were now compelled by the fear of their foreign foes and by domestic factions to make ever greater concessions to those, and there were not wanting some, who hated Catholic unity. The result was that in a short time, as the Ruthenian bishops themselves confessed, this holy cause was left with no other protection to rely upon but that of the Roman pontiffs. They for their part supported the Ruthenian Church by affectionate letters, such helps as they could supply, and particularly by means of the Apostolic Nuncio in Poland.

17. The sadder the times became, the more the prudence of the Ruthenian bishops was made manifest; they made every effort to instruct the uncultivated populace in Christian doctrine, to raise the insufficiently instructed clergy to a higher degree of learning in sacred doctrine, and to imbue monks whose observance had become slack with a new zeal for discipline and spirit of holiness. They did not lose heart even in 1632, when a great part of the goods of the Church was handed over to the recently established hierarchy of the dissident brethren and when it was decreed in the treaty between the Cossacks and the Polish king that the union of the Ruthenians with the Apostolic See was to be destroyed; on the contrary, they continued with tenacious constancy to defend the flocks entrusted to them.

18. But God does not permit his people to be tried by excessive affliction and at length, after the peace of Andrussovia in 1667, he bade more peaceful days dawn for this people after so many trials and perils. The peace thus obtained resulted daily in greater blessings for our holy religion. In fact Christian faith and Christian morals so flourished that in the two eparchies which in 1596 had unhappily remained separated from unity opinion every day grew more favorable to a return to the Catholic fold. Thus it happily came about that in 1691 the eparchy of Przemysl, and in 1700 that of Lvov were united to the Apostolic See, and so, that almost the whole of the Ruthenian people then inhabiting Poland were in enjoyment of Catholic unity. All prospered more from day to day, to the great gain of Christianity, and so in 1720 the metropolitan and the rest of the bishops of the Ruthenian Church met in council at Zamosc to provide to the best of their ability by common counsel for the growing needs of the faithful; from the decrees of this council - confirmed by our predecessor Benedict XIII in the Apostolic Constitution *Apostolatus officium* of 19th July 1724 - no small benefit resulted to the Ruthenian community.

19. However it came about by the inscrutable will of God that towards the end of the century this community was harassed by many persecutions and vexations, and after the partition of Poland these became ever harder and more bitter in the areas which were annexed to the Russian Empire. After the death of Alexander I the rash policy was deliberately adopted of entirely breaking

the union of the Ruthenians with the Roman Church. Already most of their eparchies had been almost cut off from any intercourse with the Apostolic See. Soon bishops were chosen who were imbued and inspired with zeal for schism, and so would become the lackeys and applauders of the civil power. In the seminary of Vilna, founded by the tsar Alexander I, teaching hostile to the Roman pontiffs was imparted to the clergy of both rites. The Basilian Order, whose members had always been a great support to the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite, was deprived of its own government and administration, and its monks and monasteries were entirely subjected to the consistories of the eparchies. Then the priests of the Latin rite were prohibited under grave penalties from administering the sacraments or other religious helps to the Ruthenians. Finally, alas, in 1839 the union of the Ruthenian Church with the dissident Russian Church was solemnly proclaimed.

20. It is impossible to describe the miseries, perils and hardships with which the most noble nation of the Ruthenians was afflicted at that time, for no other crime or guilt but that of crying out against the wrong done it and striving to retain its faith, when it had been driven by force and fraud into schism.

21. Justly and rightly, therefore, our predecessor Gregory XVI deplored and lamented this deed, and denounced its shamefulness to the whole Catholic world, in his allocution of 22nd November 1839. But his solemn protest and reprobation went unheard; the Catholic Church had to lament the tearing by iniquitous violence from her motherly embrace of these her sons. Moreover not many years later the eparchy of Chelm, belonging to the Polish kingdom united to Russia, suffered the same wretched fate. Those of the faithful who would not depart from the true faith, and dutifully and undauntedly resisted the union with the dissident Church imposed in 1875, were shamefully punished with fines and flogging and exile.

22. On the other hand, during this same period the Ruthenians enjoyed peace and tranquillity in the eparchies of Lvov and Przemysl, which had been united to the empire of Austria at the partition of Poland. In 1807 the metropolitan title of Halicz was restored there and permanently attached to the archdiocese of Lvov. This province flourished so much that two of its metropolitans, Michael Levitsky (1816 - 58) and Sylvester Sembratovitch (1882 - 98), who both displayed great prudence and zeal in their rule, were honored for their personal qualities and notable merits with the Roman purple, and appointed to the supreme senate of the Church. Moreover, since the number of Catholics was ever increasing, our predecessor Leo XIII formally erected a new eparchy, that of Stanislavov in 1885. Six years later the prosperity of the Galician Church was consolidated in an extraordinary manner when all the bishops with the legate of the supreme pontiff and many other clergy met at Lvov to hold there a provincial council and issue opportune liturgical and disciplinary regulations.

23. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century economic conditions led to the emigration of many Ruthenians from Galicia to the U.S.A., Canada and South America.

Our predecessor Pius X was therefore fearful that these beloved sons, not knowing the language of the place and unaccustomed to Latin rites, might be caught by the fallacies of heretics and schismatics, or might be ensnared by doubt and error and miserably abandon all religion. In 1907, therefore, he appointed a bishop with special faculties for them. Later on, since the number and the needs of these Catholics were increasing, a special ordinary bishop was appointed for Galician Catholics in the U.S.A., and another in Canada, besides the ordinary bishop for the faithful of this rite who had emigrated from the Podkarpatska Rus, Hungary or Jugoslavia. Since then, both the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda and that of the Eastern Church have issued opportune and appropriate decrees regulating the ecclesiastical affairs of the Ruthenians in these jurisdictions and in the South American countries.

24. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Catholic Ruthenian community has more than once desired, when opportunity offered, to give public expression to its gratitude for so many benefits and to its attachment to the Roman pontiffs. A notable instance occurred in 1895, the third centenary of the happy union of their fathers with the Apostolic See achieved at Rome and confirmed at Brest. Not only was the happy event recalled with appropriate celebrations in every part of Galicia, but a most distinguished delegation of the metropolitan and bishops was sent to Rome to express the love of the Ruthenian Church for the chief bishop, the successor of St. Peter, and to offer him their respect, reverence and obedience. Receiving this delegation with due honors, our predecessor Leo XIII addressed them with fatherly joy and benevolence, and he extolled the union of the Ruthenians with the Apostolic See as the salutary source of true light, unshakable peace and supernatural fruit to all those who sincerely held fast to it.

25. In our own days the benefits which the Roman pontiffs have bestowed on this beloved people have been no less. Especially when the first world war devastated those regions and during the following years they left nothing undone which could bring any help or solace to the Ruthenian community. When the difficulties which oppressed this Catholic community had, by God's help, been overcome, it was seen to respond with a ready and active will to the indefatigable zeal of its bishops and the labor of the rest of the clergy, their fellow-workers. Then, alas, came the second war and, as is well known it was much more grievous and harmful to the Ruthenian hierarchy and their faithful flock. But, before we proceed to a brief account of the present hardships and miseries which this Church is suffering to the grave peril of its very existence, we will add some fuller and clearer account of the great and high blessings brought to the Ruthenian Church and people by the union happily concluded three hundred and fifty years ago.

26. For indeed, after summarily and hastily outlining the history of this most auspicious union and seeing its vicissitudes, sometimes happy, sometimes very sad, we are faced with the question: what benefit was this union to the Ruthenian people and their Church? What profit and advantage did they receive from this Apostolic See and the Roman pontiffs? We shall be performing an opportune and useful service in duly answering this question, especially because there are not wanting some who hate and bitterly repudiate this union of Brest.

27. In the first place it must be noted that our predecessors have always shown the greatest zeal in protecting and preserving the lawful rites of the Ruthenians. For when the bishops, through the bishops of Vladimir and Lutsk who were sent to Rome on this business, asked "that His Holiness, for himself and his successors, who were never to make any change in this matter, would deign to preserve and confirm to the Eastern Church its administration of the sacraments, its rites and ceremonies, inviolate and entire, as in use at the time of the union." [7] Clement VIII graciously acceded to their petition, and prescribed that no alteration was to be made in these matters. Not even the use of the new Gregorian calendar was afterwards imposed on them, although it seemed at first that the Ruthenians ought to employ it while retaining the liturgical calendar of the Eastern rite; so that even now the Julian calendar can remain in force among them.

28. Furthermore, our same predecessor by a letter of 23rd February 1596 conceded that the election of those who had been duly nominated as suffragan bishops of the Ruthenians should be confirmed by the metropolitan, as was proposed in the pact of reconciliation, and in accordance with the ancient discipline of the Eastern Church. Others of our predecessors permitted the metropolitans to establish schools in any part of Russia and freely and lawfully to commit them to any directors and teachers they pleased. They also decreed that the Ruthenians should not be at a disadvantage compared with the rest of Catholics as regards the distribution of spiritual favors; they wished them to share with the rest of the faithful in all grants of indulgences, on condition that they should also fulfill the necessary conditions. Paul V extended to all those who attended the schools established by the metropolitans the special spiritual privileges granted by the Roman pontiffs to members of the sodalities of the Blessed Virgin established in the churches of the Society of Jesus; and Urban VIII granted to all who made retreats with the Basilian monks the same indulgences as had been bestowed on the clerks regular of the Society of Jesus.

29. From all this it is evident that our predecessors have always shown the same fatherly love to the Ruthenians as to the Catholics of the Latin rite. They have also considered it most important to defend the rights and privileges of their hierarchy. When many Latins asserted that the Ruthenian rite was of inferior standing, and some Latin bishops even declared that the Ruthenian prelates did not enjoy full episcopal rights and functions but were subject to them, this Apostolic See rejected these unjust and fanciful opinions; on 28th September 1643 a decree was published to the following effect: "Cardinal Pamphili reported divers decrees of the special Congregation for the united Ruthenians and His Holiness approved the decree of the same special Congregation of the preceding 1st August, that the Ruthenian bishops in union were bishops, and were to be so called and regarded. He approved the decree of the same Congregation that the Ruthenian bishops should be able to erect schools in their dioceses for the instruction of their youth in letters and sciences, and that the Ruthenian ecclesiastics enjoyed the privileges *fori, canonis, immunitatis, libertatis*, which the priests of the Latin Church enjoy." [8]

30. The tireless and solicitous care of the Roman pontiffs for the preservation and protection of the Ruthenian rites is best seen from the course of the long drawn out question of the change of rite.

Although, for special reasons which were utterly alien to their will, they could not through a long period impose on the laity an absolute prohibition of this change, none the less their repeated efforts to establish that prohibition, and their exhortations to the Latin bishops and priests, clearly show how much our predecessors had this matter at heart. In the actual decree which in 1595 happily established the union of the Ruthenians with the Apostolic See there is no clear and open prohibition of going over from the Eastern to the Latin rite. Nonetheless, what the mind of the Apostolic See then already was is shown by the letter sent in 1608 by the general of the Society of Jesus to his subjects in Poland. He tells them that those who had never belonged to the Latin rite could not embrace it after the reconciliation, "because it was the precept of the Church, and was specially laid down in the documents of the union under Clement VIII that everyone should remain in the rite of his own Church." [9]

31. But, as complaints became more and more frequent that young Ruthenian nobles were adopting the Latin rite, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda by a decree of 7th February 1624 ordered that "in future it should not be lawful for any of the united Ruthenians, whether lay folk or ecclesiastics, secular or regular, and especially monks of St. Basil the Great, to go over to the Latin rite, for any reason, however urgent, without the special permission of the Apostolic See." [10]

32. However, when king Sigismund III of Poland petitioned that this prohibition should not be absolutely enforced - he wished it to apply only to ecclesiastics - our predecessor Urban VIII could not but assent to this most illustrious supporter of Catholic unity. The Apostolic See therefore endeavored to obtain by advice and admonition what, for special reasons, was not enjoined by law, and there are many proofs of this.

33. Thus already in the preamble of the decree of 7th July 1624, by which the adoption of the Latin rite was forbidden only to the clergy, it was laid down that priests of the Latin rite were to be warned not, when hearing confessions, to encourage the lay faithful to adopt it. Warnings to the same effect were repeated again and again, and the Apostolic Nuncios in Poland by order of the supreme pontiffs made every effort that they should have the desired result. That the mind and judgment of the Apostolic See on this subject did not change even in later times is shown by the letter of our predecessor Benedict XIV to the bishops of Lvov and Przemyśl in 1751 in which *inter alia* this is found: "Your letter written on 17th July has reached us; in it you justly complain of Ruthenians going over from the Greek to the Latin rite, whereas you are well aware, venerable brethren, that our predecessors have detested and we detest these changes of rite, since we very much desire that preservation and not the destruction of the Greek rite." [11] The same pontiff therefore promised that he would remove all hindrances in the matter and would finally prohibit such going over to the Latin rite in a solemn decree. However, the adverse circumstances and conditions of the times did not permit that his wishes and promises should have their desired outcome.

34. But the Roman pontiffs Clement XIV and Pius VII decreed that Catholics of the Ruthenian rite

living in Russia could not change over to the Latin rite; and then at length, in the agreement styled *Concordia* entered into by the Latin and Ruthenian bishops under the auspices of the congregation for the promotion of the faith in 1863, it was laid down that this prohibition bound all Ruthenians.

35. From this brief historical summary it is easily seen with what care the Apostolic See has watched over the integral preservation of the Ruthenian rite, both as regards the community as a whole and as regards individuals. However, no one will be surprised if it has permitted or temporarily approved some minor changes on account of the special circumstances of the times, provided always that the chief and essential rites remained whole and entire. Thus, for example, it has permitted no changes to be made in the rites of the liturgy, save the few decreed by the Ruthenian bishops themselves in the council of Zamosc.

36. However, ostensibly for the protection of the complete integrity of their rite but in reality so that the unlearned people might more easily fall off from the Catholic faith, some crafty promoters of schism endeavored to reintroduce old customs, already in part obsolete. The Roman pontiffs, therefore, as in duty bound, openly denounced their clever and hidden machinations and decreed that "without consulting the Apostolic See no innovation was to be made in the rites of the liturgy, even on the grounds of restoring ceremonies thought to be more in conformity with liturgies approved by the same See, but only for very grave reason and by the authority of the Apostolic See." [12]

37. For the rest, far from its being the mind of the Apostolic See to damage the integrity or hinder the preservation of this rite, it rather caused the Ruthenian Church to cherish most religiously the traditions in liturgical matters handed down from antiquity. An outstanding sign of this zealous favor towards the Ruthenian rite may be seen in the new Roman edition of its liturgical books begun in our pontificate and already in part happily accomplished. In this edition the Apostolic See, gladly assenting to the wishes of the Ruthenian bishops, has endeavored to restore their liturgical rites in accordance with their venerated ancient traditions.

38. There now comes to our mind another benefit which the Ruthenian community certainly derived from this union with the Apostolic See. Through this unity this most noble people was joined to the Catholic Church, by whose life accordingly it lives, by whose truth it is enlightened, in whose grace it shares. From this proceed streams from the heavenly fountain which so penetrate and permeate all things that the most beautiful flowers of all virtues and an abundance of salutary fruit are brought forth.

39. Before the return to unity our dissident brethren themselves lamented that our holy religion was in a ruinous state in those regions, that the vice of simony everywhere prevailed in the choice of bishops and other sacred ministers, that Church goods were dissipated, the morals of monks corrupt, the discipline of monasteries in decay, and even the bond of obedience between the

faithful and their pastors every day further weakened and imperiled. But, on the contrary, after the establishment of unity, by the inspiration and help of God, the state of affairs gradually improved. How great was the strength of mind and constancy needed by the bishops to restore Church discipline everywhere, especially in the early days; so troubled by every kind of disturbance and opposition! What persevering work and patient labor they had to devote to raising up a clergy of the highest moral standard; to consoling the flocks committed to them, harassed by such harsh circumstances; and finally to sustaining and strengthening in every way those whose faith was wavering and faltering! None the less, contrary to all human calculation, not only did this auspicious union triumphantly overcome all the contrary storms, but it emerged from its victorious battle with increased vitality and strength. Thus it came about that it was not by the sword or the scourge, not by promises or threats, but by an outstanding example of religious life and a kind of manifest display of divine grace, that the Catholic Ruthenians finally brought the dissident eparchies of Lvov and Przemysl to enter the one fold.

40. When at last peace and tranquillity were restored, especially in the eighteenth century, the flourishing state of the Ruthenian Church manifested itself even externally. Witnesses to this are the great monuments of this period, the chief church of the city of Lvov, dedicated to St. George, and the churches and monasteries built at Polshayev, Torokan, Zhirovitse and elsewhere.

41. It seems useful to make a brief reference here to the Basilian monks, who in all these matters have deserved so well, so excellently, by their great and zealous work. After their monasteries under the influence of Velamin Rutsky had been brought back to a better and holier state and formed into a congregation, many of their members gave such an example of piety, learning and apostolic zeal that they became the leaders and teachers of religious living to the Christian people. In the schools which they opened they not only imparted to youths, often of outstanding ability, an excellent education in divine and human knowledge, but communicated to them their own solid virtue, so that they were in no way surpassed by those educated in the Latin schools. Our dissident brethren clearly perceived this, since many of them gladly left home and country to betake themselves to these homes of learning and share in their attractions and advantages.

42. In more recent times the Ruthenian community has benefited no less from its union with the Apostolic See. This may easily be seen by a consideration of the state of the Galician Church as it was before the ruin and devastation wrought by this savage war. In this province the faithful numbered about 3,600,000, the priests 2,275, and places of worship or parishes 2,226. Besides this, outside Galicia but springing from it, there were many Catholic Ruthenians, especially in America - they may be estimated at 400,000 or 500,000. Thus the number of the faithful was perhaps greater than at any time in their history, and in every eparchy they showed a correspondingly outstanding zeal for virtue, piety and religious living. In the seminaries of the eparchies students were duly and diligently educated in preparation for the sacred ministry. The Christian faithful, participating with great love and reverence in divine worship according to their own rite, brought forth abundantly the goodly fruit of religion.

43. While cursorily and briefly recalling the flourishing state of the Ruthenian Church, we cannot pass over in silence the illustrious metropolitan Andrew Szepticky. For nearly forty-five years he labored with tireless assiduity, making himself most acceptable to his flock on more than one account besides what concerned their spiritual profit. In the course of his episcopate a theological society was founded to encourage the clergy in a deeper and more fruitful study of the sacred science; an ecclesiastical academy was erected in Lvov in which Ruthenian youths of superior intellectual gifts could apply themselves to philosophy, theology and other higher studies in the manner customary in universities; every kind of literary production, books, newspapers and reviews, greatly increased and won a good reputation even among foreign nations. Besides all this, sacred art was cultivated in accordance with the tradition of the nation and its particular genius; a museum and other homes of art were equipped with outstanding works of antiquity, and finally, a number of institutions were begun and developed to meet the needs of the poorer classes of citizens and to assist the indigent.

44. We must mention, too, the outstanding merits of the religious societies both of men and women, whose work in these matters brought too great spiritual profit. We will speak first of the monasteries of Basilian monks and nuns. In the time of the emperor Joseph II of Austria they had suffered great harm from the invasion of the civil power into their affairs, but later, in 1882 and the following years, they were restored to their glory by the reform of Dobromil, as it is called; they join an ardent apostolic zeal to the love of the life of seclusion and the inspiration from on high which they draw from the rules and example of their holy founder. To these old monastic communities have been added equally praiseworthy new religious societies of men and women; such are the Order of Studites, whose monks devote themselves above all to heavenly contemplation and works of holy penance, and the religious congregation of the Holy Redeemer, of the Ruthenian rite, whose members work most fruitfully both in Galicia and in Canada. Finally, there are many institutes of religious women - the Servants of Mary Immaculate, the Myrrhbearers (Myrophoræ), the Sisters of St. Joseph, of St. Josaphat, of the Holy Family, of St. Vincent de Paul--who work for the education of girls and undertake the care of the sick.

45. Mention must also be made here of the college dedicated to St. Josaphat, erected on the Janiculum and munificently endowed by our predecessor Pius XI. Selected young men had for centuries been prepared for the priesthood in the Pontifical College of the Greeks, and then in 1897 another of our predecessors, Leo XIII, established a special college at Rome for young Ruthenians divinely called to the priesthood. Finally, as we have said, since this building had become inadequate for the increasing number of students, our immediate predecessor, conformably to his special love for the Ruthenian people, built it new and larger premises, so that in them candidates for the priesthood should be instructed and formed in sacred learning and the special discipline of their rite, and should happily grow in reverence, obedience and love towards the Vicar of Jesus Christ, for the future welfare of the Ruthenian Church.

46. The Ruthenian community received another not less important ornament and benefit from its

union with the Apostolic See in being graced with a noble company of confessors and martyrs. To preserve their faith unimpaired and to maintain their zealous loyalty to the Roman pontiffs, these did not hesitate to endure every kind of labor and hardship, or even to go gladly to their death, in the spirit of that maxim of the Divine Redeemer: "Blessed are you, when men hate you and cast you off and revile you, when they reject your name as something evil, for the Son of Man's sake. When that day comes, rejoice and exult over it; for behold, a rich reward awaits you in heaven." [13]

47. The first of their number to come to our mind is the holy pontiff Josaphat Kuntzevitch, whose unconquerable fortitude we have briefly praised above. When he was murderously sought out by abandoned enemies of the Catholic name, he freely offered himself to the murderers, and gave himself as a victim to bring about as soon as possible the return of his dissident brethren. He was the outstanding martyr for Catholic faith and unity at that period, but not the only one; not a few both of the clergy and the laity received the same palm of victory after him; some were slain with the sword, some atrociously flogged to death, some drowned in the Dnieper, so passing from their triumph over death to heaven.

48. Not much later, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the Cossacks openly took up arms against Poland. Then the hatred of those who opposed religious unity became ever stronger and more violent; they were convinced that the introduction of this union was the cause of all the calamities and evils that had befallen them; they were determined therefore to use every way and means to cast it down and destroy it. There resulted almost innumerable wrongs to the Catholic Church of the Ruthenians; many churches were profaned, pillaged, demolished, and their furnishing and property destroyed. Not a few of the clergy and a great number of the faithful were severely flogged, terribly tortured, most cruelly done to death. Even the bishops themselves were despoiled of their goods, ejected from their sees and forced to flee. However, even amid the raging of this storm, their spirit did not fail; they did everything possible for the protection and safe-keeping of the flocks entrusted to them, and, more than that, in their dire straits they exerted every effort, by prayer and argument and labor, to bring the whole Russian Church with the tsar Alexis into the unity of the fold.

49. Besides all this a new and no less bitter persecution of Catholicism was begun a few years before the partition of Poland. At the time when the troops of the Russian emperor had invaded Poland many churches of the Ruthenian rite were taken away from the Catholics by force of arms; the priests who refused to abjure their faith were put in chains, insulted, scourged and cast into prison, where they suffered cruelly from hunger, thirst and cold.

50. Not inferior to these in constancy and fortitude were the clergy who, about the year 1839, suffered the loss of their goods and even of their liberty, rather than abandon their religious duties. Among these we wish to recall in a special way the well-known priest, Joseph Ancewski, who was kept in harsh confinement in the monastery of Suzdal for thirty-two years, attaining the reward of

his singular steadfastness in 1877, when he died a most holy death. We recall also the one hundred and sixty priests, who for open profession of the Catholic faith were torn away from their families, which were left in wretchedness, were transported into the interior of Russia and imprisoned in monasteries, but could not be turned from their holy resolve by hunger or any other affliction.

51. Equally conspicuous for fortitude were the many, both clergy and laity, of the eparchy of Chelm, who with unconquerable courage resisted the persecutors of the Catholic faith. For example, when troops came to seize their church and hand it over to the schismatics, the inhabitants of Pratolin did not resist force by force, but, unarmed, put their crowded bodies in the way of their attackers like a living wall; some were wounded and savagely ill-treated, some suffered long imprisonment or were deported to the icy regions of Siberia, some, finally, were put to the sword and shed their blood for Christ. The cause of those who sealed their Catholic faith by death has been begun in their eparchy, and so there is hope that at length it may be permitted to number them among the blessed. These iniquitous crimes were not, however, perpetrated in only one place, but in many cities, towns and villages. First, all the churches of the Catholics were handed over to the followers of schism, all the clergy driven from their places and forced to leave unguarded the flock committed to them. Then the faithful, with no account taken of their own wishes, were enrolled in the dissident Church. However, although orphaned of their pastors and deprived of the offices and helps of their religion, they made supreme efforts to hold fast to their faith. Thus it was that later when members of the Society of Jesus secretly went to them, in disguise and at the peril of their lives, to instruct, to exhort and to comfort them, they welcomed them with the greatest joy and devotion.

52. But a wonderful and happy spectacle was to be seen in the Ruthenian districts in 1905, when liberty to profess any religion was to some extent granted. Innumerable Catholics came forth from their retreats into open day. They had no priests of their own Eastern rite, so they went in a body, singing their thanks and praise to God, with the standard of the cross carried on high and their sacred pictures publicly exposed for veneration, to the churches of the Latin rite, entry to which had previously been prohibited to them under severe penalties. There they begged the lawful ministers of the Church to open their doors to them, receive their profession of faith and enroll them again among the Catholics. In this way in a short time 200,000 faithful were duly received back into the Church.

53. However, even in more recent times the bishops and priests and their faithful flocks have needed fortitude and constancy of spirit to retain their Catholic faith, protect the Church and defend its sacred liberty. Among them we must recall here, with special honor, the metropolitan Andrew Szepticky. During the first European war, when Galicia was occupied by Russian armies, he was expelled from his see and deported to a monastery, where he was for a time at least kept in prison; he had no greater desire than to testify to his great veneration for the Apostolic See, and even, sustained by God's grace, gladly to suffer martyrdom for his flock, for whose welfare he had

already long spent his strength and solicitude.

54. We have now seen, from the brief historical relation of events in this letter, how many and how great were the benefits and blessings brought to the Ruthenian people by its union with the Catholic Church. This is not, indeed, to be wondered at; for if "it was God's good pleasure to let all completeness dwell" in Christ,[14] no one can enjoy this completeness who is separated from the Church which "is his body." [15] As our predecessor Pelagius II asserts, "whoever is not in the peace and unity of the Church will not be able to possess God." [16] We have seen, too, that this beloved Ruthenian people has had to suffer great hardships, perils and vexations in defending to the best of its power its Catholic unity, but from these Divine Providence has freed it again and again and restored peace to it.

55. But now, with the greatest fatherly anguish of heart, we see a new and terrible storm threatening this Church. The information which reaches us is scanty, but is sufficient to cause solicitude and fill us with anxiety. It is the anniversary of the day three hundred and fifty years ago, when this ancient community of Christians was happily united to the supreme pastor, the successor of St. Peter; but this same day has become for us "a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds." [17]

56. For we have learnt with great grief that, in those territories which have recently been made over to the sway of Russia, our dear brethren and sons of the Ruthenian people are in dire straits in consequence of their fidelity to the Apostolic See; every means are being employed to take them away from the bosom of their mother, the Church, and to induce them, against their will and against their known religious duty, to enter the communion of the dissidents. Thus it is reported that the clergy of the Ruthenian rite have complained in a letter to the civil government that in the Western Ukraine, as it is called today, their Church has been placed in an extremely difficult position; all its bishops and many of its priests have been arrested; and at the same time it has been prohibited that anyone should take up the government of the same Ruthenian Church.

57. We are well aware that this harsh and severe treatment is speciously attributed to political reasons. But this is no new procedure used today for the first time; very often in the course of the centuries the enemies of the Church have hesitated to make public profession of their opposition to the Catholic faith and to attack it openly; they brought cunning and subtle allegations that Catholics were plotting against the State. In the very same way the Jews accused the Divine Redeemer himself before the Roman governor, saying "We have discovered that this man is subverting the loyalty of our people, forbids the payment of tribute to Caesar." [18] But faces and events themselves plainly manifest, and show in its true light, what was and is the real cause of this savagery. For, as is well known, the patriarch Alexis, recently elected by the dissident bishops of Russia, openly exalts and preaches defection from the Catholic Church in a letter lately addressed to the Ruthenian Church, a letter which contributed not a little to the initiation of this persecution.

58. These griefs cut us the more deeply because while the cruel war was yet raging almost all the nations of the world, through a gathering of their representatives, solemnly proclaimed among other things that no persecution of religion must ever be undertaken. This had given us hope that peace and true liberty would be granted everywhere to the Catholic Church, the more so since the Church has always taught, and teaches, that obedience to the ordinances of the lawfully established civil power, within the sphere and bounds of its authority, is a duty of conscience. But, unfortunately, the events we have mentioned have grievously and bitterly weakened, have almost destroyed, our hope and confidence so far as the lands of the Ruthenians are concerned.

59. Amid these heavy calamities, since human help is seen to be of no avail, nothing remains, venerable brethren, but earnestly to implore the most merciful God, who "will do justice to the needy and will avenge the poor,"[19] that of his loving kindness he would himself calm this terrible storm and at length bring it to an end. We again and again exhort you and the flock committed to you to join with us by humble prayer and works of penance in imploring him by whose heavenly light the minds of men are illumined, by whose heavenly command their wills are directed, to spare his people and not to give up his heritage to reproach,[20] and speedily to free the Church of the Ruthenians from this hurtful crisis.

60. In this sad and anxious state of affairs our fatherly heart goes out especially to those who are so harshly and bitterly oppressed by it, and first of all to you, venerable brothers, the bishops of the Ruthenian people. Great as are the trials which afflict you, you are more burdened with anxiety for the safety of your flocks than for the injuries and sufferings inflicted upon yourselves, in accordance with the words: "the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." [21] The present is dark and the future uncertain and full of cares, but do not lose heart. Rather so display yourselves, presenting "such a spectacle . . . to the whole creation, men and angels alike," [22] that all the faithful of Christ may see in your endurance and courage a shining example. Courageously, and steadfastly enduring this attack of your enemies, and afire with a divine love for the Church, you become "the good odor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved and in them that perish." [23] In bonds as you are, and separated from your sons, it is not in your power to give them instruction in our holy religion, but your very bonds more fully and profoundly proclaim and preach Christ.

61. As a father we next address you, our beloved sons who have received the seal of the priesthood, and must therefore follow more closely in the footsteps of Christ, "who suffered for us," [24] and still more than others must bear the brunt of battle. We are deeply moved by your distress, but rejoice that we can say to the greater number of you, borrowing the words of the Divine Redeemer: "I know of all thy doings, thy faith, thy love, thy generosity, thy endurance, how in these last days thou art more active than at first." [25] We exhort you to continue steadfastly and inflexibly to stand firm in your faith in these lamentable times; continue to uphold the weak and support the wavering. So far as there is need, warn the faithful of Christ entrusted to you that it is absolutely unlawful, even merely exteriorly or verbally, to deny or abandon Christ and His Church;

expose the cunning wiles of those who promise men earthly advantages and greater happiness in this life, but destroy their souls. Show yourselves "as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses . . . in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left." [26]

62. Lastly we address all of you, Catholics of the Ruthenian Church. We share your sorrows and afflictions with a father's heart. We know that grievous snares are being set for your faith. There seems ground for fear that in the near future still greater hardships will befall those who refuse to betray their sacred religious allegiance. For that reason we even now exhort you in the Lord, beloved sons, to be terrified by no menaces or injuries, to be moved by no danger of exile or risk even of life ever to abjure your faith and your fidelity to Mother Church. That treasure is involved which is hidden in a field and the man who finds it "hides it again, and now, for the joy it gives him is going home to sell all that he has and buy that field." [27] Remember, too, what the Divine Redeemer Himself said in the Gospel: "He is not worthy of me, that loves father or mother more; he is not worthy of me, that loves son or daughter more; he is not worthy of me, that does not take up his cross and follow me. He who secures his own life will lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake that will secure it." [28] To this divine pronouncement we will add the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "It is well said, We are to share his life, because we have shared his death; if we endure, we shall reign with him, if we disown him, he in his turn will disown us. If we play him false, he remains true to his word; he cannot disown himself." [29]

63. We think, beloved sons, that we cannot reinforce this fatherly exhortation of ours and bring it to an end more fittingly than by these admonitions of the same Apostle of the Gentiles: "Be on the watch, stand firm in the faith, play the man, be full of courage." [30] "Obey those who have charge of you," [31] your bishops and priests, when they give you instructions for your salvation and in accordance with the prescriptions of the Church. Offer active resistance to all those who in any way whatever scheme against your faith. Be "eager to preserve that unity the Spirit gives you, whose bond is peace. You are one body, with a single Spirit; each of you, when he was called, called in the same hope." [32] In the midst of every kind of sorrow and affliction remember "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come that shall be revealed in us." [33] "But the Lord keeps faith with us; he will strengthen you, and keep you from all harm." [34]

64. We have absolute confidence that, by the inspiration and help of divine grace, you will respond courageously and with a will to these exhortations of ours; and we foresee and humbly pray that better and more peaceful times will come for you from the merciful Father, the God who gives all encouragement. [35]

Meanwhile, as a pledge of heavenly gifts and a witness of our goodwill, with all our heart we give the Apostolic Blessing to all of you, venerable brethren, and to your flocks, and especially to the bishops, priests and all the faithful of the Ruthenian Church.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on 23rd December 1945, the seventh year of our pontificate.

## PIUS XII

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1. Leo XIII: Apostolic Letter *Praeclara gratulationis*, 20th June, 1894, Acta Leonis XIII, 14, p. 201.
2. Leo XIII, *loc. cit.*.
3. Baronius: *Annales*, VII, Rome 1596, App. p. 681.
4. A. Theiner: *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, III, p. 240 sqq.
5. A. Theiner, *loc. cit.* p. 251.
6. Matthew xiii, 25.
7. Theiner: *loc. cit.* p. 237.
8. *Acta et decr, SS. Conciliorum rec. col. 600, nota 2.*
9. *loc. cit.* Col. 602.
10. *loc cit.* Col. 603.
11. *loc. cit.* Col. 606.
12. Cf. Pius IX: letter *Omnem sollicitudinem*, 13th May 1874, citing Gregory XVI: *Inter gravissimos*, Pius IX *Acta*, VI, 317.
13. *Luke* vi, 22-3.
14. *Col.* I, 9.
15. *Eph.* i, 23.
16. *Epist. ad episcopos Istriae, Acta Conc. Oecum.* IV, ii, 107.
17. *Soph.*, i, 15.
18. *Luke* xxiii, 2.

19. Ps. cxxxix, 13.

20. Cf. Joel ii, 17.

21. John x, 11.

22. I Cor. iv, 9.

23. II Cor. ii, 15.

24. Cf. I Pet. ii, 21.

25. Apoc. ii, 19.

26. II Cor. vi, 4 sqq.

27. Matth. xiii, 44.

28. Matth. x, 37 sqq.

29. II Tim. ii, 11 sqq.

30. I Cor. xvi, 13.

31. Heb. xiii, 17.

32. Ephes. iv, 3-4.

33. Rom. viii, 18.

34. 2 Thess, iii, 3.

35. Cf. 2 Cor. i, 3.