

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

*of our Holy Father, by Divine Providence, Pope
Pius XI, on the occasion of the sixth centenary of
the canonisation of St. Thomas Aquinas*

*To our venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primates,
Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in
Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See,*

PIUS P.P. XI.

Venerable Brethren, Health and the Apostolic
Blessing.

Only recently in an apostolic letter, following and confirming the statutes of Canon Law, we declared Thomas Aquinas to be the guide of youth who are engaged in the higher ecclesiastical studies. The approaching commemoration of the six hundredth anniversary of St. Thomas's enrollment among the throng of the saints affords an excellent opportunity of urging and insisting upon the supreme profit to be derived by those who make themselves pupils of so great a Doctor. For true science and genuine piety are linked together in a wondrous kinship. God is very Truth and supreme Goodness; therefore, when God's glory is sought in the salvation of souls—and that is the chief and essential function of the Church—it is not enough that the ministers of holy things should be well instructed in necessary knowledge, but that they should also abound in becoming virtues. This marvellous fellowship of doctrine with piety, of learning with virtue, of truth with charity, was singularly pre-eminent in the Angelic Doctor. He is likened to the sun because he sheds both light and warmth: he pours illumination into the mind and enkindles the flame of virtue in the will. God, the Fount of wisdom and holiness, seems to have wished to show forth in

Blackfriars

Thomas how intimately linked are the practice of virtue and the contemplation of truth, and how a deeper pondering of truth produces more perfect and embellished virtues. He who lives purely and spotlessly and has curbed all unruly desires is set free from a great hindrance: unshackled and disembarassed, he can lift his soul to heaven and look into the hidden things of God. As Thomas himself said: 'First life, then teaching; for the life leads to the knowledge of the truth.'¹ Similarly the sustained effort to understand supernatural things excites men to live more perfectly. Such knowledge must not be thought barren or useless: it teems with life and utility and its beauty is capable of enthralling and transforming the whole man.

These are the things, venerable Brethren, we should learn from this commemoration; but in order that they may appear more clearly, We have deemed it fitting to speak briefly in this Letter of the holiness and teaching of Thomas Aquinas and to show the effects that flow therefrom for the priesthood and especially for those who are preparing for Orders. Moreover, we have wished to give a suitable document to all Christendom.

Thomas possessed all the virtues in an excellent degree, and, according to his own teaching, they were all connected, growing together and rooted in charity 'which gives the form to the acts of all the virtues.'² But if we would seek for special and peculiar marks of holiness, we should single out that virtue which gives Thomas a certain likeness to angelic natures, namely chastity. This virtue he kept unsullied in the face of a critical and perilous temptation and was worthy to be mystically girded by angels. This high

¹ *Comment. in Matth.*, V.

² *2a, 2ae*, XXIII, 8. *1a, 2ae*, LXV

Encyclical Letter

regard for purity was combined with hatred of the transitory joys of earth and a holy scorn for worldly honour. With inflexible firmness he resisted the insistent coaxings of his relations who wished him to be advanced to high places, and his own earnest entreaties prevented the Supreme Pontiff from conferring upon him the highest dignities and offices of the Church. But the chief and distinguishing feature of Thomas's sanctity is what St. Paul calls *the word of wisdom* (I Cor. xii, 8)—that combination of acquired and infused wisdom which is the fruit of humility, zeal for prayer and holy love of God.

Humility was truly the foundation in which Thomas's other virtues were fixed,—witness the meek obedience he showed to a lay-brother. Humility likewise shines transparently through his writings which are fragrant with loyal obedience to the Fathers of the Church. 'So greatly he revered the ancient Doctors that he would seem to have inherited the minds of them all.'³ But his humility is supremely evidenced by the fact that he used his God-given genius not for his personal glory, but solely in the cause of truth. While other philosophers spend themselves in spreading abroad their own brilliance, he strives to hide himself behind his teaching, and thereby the heavenly light of truth alone gleams forth from him in unalloyed radiance.—Humility then and cleanness of heart together with unflagging zeal for prayer made the soul of Thomas docile and ready to yield to the promptings and illuminations of the Holy Ghost. The very principles and essence of contemplation consist in the acceptance and the following out of these inspirations. In order the more readily to obtain these illuminations from above, he would often abstain from food, spend whole nights in prayerful vigil and, surrendering to a holy impulse, he would repeatedly lean his head

³ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*.

Blackfriars

against the tabernacle and he would constantly turn his eyes with sorrow and love towards the image of Jesus Crucified; and he confided to his friend, St. Bonaventure, that, whatever he knew, he had for the most part learned from the Book of the Crucifix. Truly it could be said of Thomas as it was said of Dominic, his Father, that he never spoke except of God or to God.

Since he was wont to contemplate everything in God, the First Cause and Last End of all things, it was easy for him in his *Summa Theologica* and in his life to follow the two-fold wisdom of which we have already spoken. Here is his own description: 'By means of the wisdom which is acquired by human study, we have a right judgement about divine things according to the perfect use of reason. But there is another wisdom that comes down from above and judges of divine things by virtue of the natural affinity it has with them. This is the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . by which a man is made perfect in divine things, not only learning but also experiencing divine things.'⁴

This God-given or infused wisdom in company with the other gifts of the Holy Ghost and charity, the queen of all the virtues, increased continually in the heart of Thomas. For him it was a most certain doctrine that the love of God must always be on the increase: 'This is evident from the very form of the commandment, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*; the whole is the same as the perfect . . . *The end of the commandment is charity*, as the Apostle says (I Tim., i, 5) and the end is not subject to a measure, but only such things as are subject to the end.'⁵ And that is why the perfection of charity falls under a commandment and why everyone, according to his state of life, is strictly bound to strive after the perfection of charity. Further, charity properly makes

⁴ *2a, 2ae, XLV, 1, ad 2: 2.*

⁵ *2a, 2ae, CLXXXIV, 3.*

Encyclical Letter

a man tend towards God and it so unites his will to God that he no longer lives to himself, but unto God alone.⁶ Consequently the ever-increasing love of God and the two-fold wisdom wrought in Thomas a complete and perfect forgetfulness of self so that when Jesus spoke to him from the crucifix the words, *Well hast thou written of me, Thomas: what reward wouldest thou have?* he answered, *None, Lord but Thee.* Thus fired with charity, he ceased not from deeds of service for others, either by writing books or assisting his brethren in their labours, relieving the poor even to the extent of despoiling himself of his own clothing, restoring health to the sick—witness the miracle he worked upon a poor woman who was healed of an issue of blood by touching the fringe of his habit as he went up to preach at the Vatican Basilica on Easter Day.

And in which of the Doctors shall we find St. Paul's *word of wisdom* more eminently than in the Angelical? For his teaching does not simply instruct the minds of men, but impels their hearts to the keenest and most zealous love of God. 'God's love pours forth and creates goodness in things,' as he himself beautifully says; and he never wearies of illustrating all the mysteries of this diffusion of the divine Goodness. 'Hence it belongs to the essence of the highest God to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature, which God has chiefly brought about through the Incarnation.'⁸ St. Thomas's genius and the love that burned within him appear nowhere more gloriously than in the Office he composed in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. For this ineffable Sacrament he summed up his life-long devotion when, upon receiving the Viaticum, he said, '*I receive Thee the price of my soul's redemption; for Thy love I have studied, watched and laboured.*'

⁶ 2a, 2ae, XVII, 6, ad 2m.

⁷ I. XX, 2.

⁸ III, I, 1.

Blackfriars

From this slight glance at Thomas's great virtues it will not be difficult to understand the extraordinary excellence of his doctrine and the great authority it holds in the Church. Our Predecessors, as it were with unanimous utterance, have sounded its praises. Alexander IV during the very lifetime of Thomas did not hesitate to write: 'To our beloved son, Thomas Aquinas, conspicuous for nobility and uprightness of life, who has through the grace of God established a whole treasury of scholarly science.' And after his departure from this life, John XXII seems to have declared not only his virtues but even his doctrine sacrosanct, when addressing the Cardinals in Consistory, he uttered these memorable words: 'He has illumined the Church more than all the other Doctors. A man will make more progress during one year in his books than a whole life-time spent in the writings of others.'

The greatness of Thomas's intellectual glory was acknowledged by Pius V who declared him a Doctor of the Church with the title of the Angelic. His fame in the Church is indicated by the fact that the Fathers at the Council of Trent reverently proposed to place two books open upon the altar, the Scriptures and the *Summa Theologica*. But it is not possible to recount all the innumerable documents of the Apostolic See, yet we must not omit to mention Leo XIII, who did so much to revive Thomistic studies. This one work alone, even apart from all else that he did so wisely and well, would have been enough to secure for our Illustrious Predecessor, Leo, immortal fame and glory. Pius X, of holy memory, following Leo's worthy example, declared the splendour of St. Thomas in his *motu proprio, Doctoris Angelici*, in which he said, 'Since the death of the holy Doctor there has never been a council of the Church at which he was not present by his doctrine and influence.' More recently

Encyclical Letter

Benedict XV, our beloved Predecessor, more than once repeated the same saying; and it was reserved for him to give in the Code of Canon Law which he promulgated a unique consecration to 'the method, doctrine and principles'⁹ of the Angelic Doctor. We ourselves therefore, in approving these tributes to so great a genius, consider that Thomas should be called not only the *Angelic* but also the *Common* or *Universal* Doctor of the Church, because his doctrine the Church has made her own. But because it would be an almost endless task to follow out all the causes and explanations our Predecessors have given of Thomas's excellence, it will suffice to show that St. Thomas wrote, as he lived, inspired by a supernatural impulse, and that therefore his writings in which all the principles and laws of holy learning are contained, may be said to be of a universal nature and appeal.

For, whenever by teaching or writing, he treats of divine things, he gives to theologians a splendid example of the intimate relationship that should exist between study and personal devotion. The man who can reproduce an external description of a strange land cannot be said to know it quite in the same way as one who has actually lived there; so too no one can acquire an intimate knowledge of God by mere scientific investigations unless he lives a life of close union with God. The whole theology of St. Thomas is a practical study in friendship with God. As a small boy at Monte Casino he ceaselessly asked, *What is God?* and the writings of his mature manhood are an effort to answer this question; whether he is treating of the creation of the world, of man, laws, virtues or the Sacraments—all is seasoned with the thought of God, the Author of our salvation.

St. Thomas enumerates the causes that make sacred study fruitless and barren: these are curiosity (which

⁹ Cf. Can. 1366, § 2.

Blackfriars

is the disordered lust for knowledge), intellectual sloth and the cowardly shirking of difficulties; and as remedies against these, he urges a lively eagerness for work which will enkindle the fires of piety and gather force and strength from a holy life. Sacred studies are guided by a three-fold light, right reason, God-given faith and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thomas abounded in all three. He would humbly implore the Lord with fasts and prayers for the explanation of his difficulties; and God, in his kindness, would hearken to him and even send the Princes of the Apostles to instruct him. Hence it is no wonder that at the end of his mortal life when he had reached the loftiest heights of contemplation, he should regard all his writings and sayings as so much chaff, and that he should say he could dictate no more: he could now only await the vision of God. Thomas has told us that the chief fruits of sacred study are a great love of God and a great desire for eternal things.

By his example he teaches us how we should enter into our studies and at the same time he gives us the firm and unshaken principles that should govern them all. Has any other master explained the nature, method and division of philosophy better than he? Consider only the clearness with which he demonstrates how all the parts and members of this science fit so beautifully and harmoniously into an ordered whole. 'It is the function of a wise man,' he said, 'to order. Because wisdom is chiefly the perfection of the reason whose property is to know the order and relation of things, for, although the senses arrive at the knowledge of things absolutely, yet it belongs to the mind or reason alone to know the order of one to another. Sciences are diverse according to the different orders that reason properly considers. The order which reason makes in its own act of consideration belongs to rational philosophy (or *Logic*) whose func-

Encyclical Letter

tion is to consider the order of the parts of speech one to another and the relation of principles to conclusions and to one another. Natural Philosophy (*Physica*) considers the order of things which human reason considers but does not create, so that under the heading of Natural Philosophy is comprised *Metaphysics*. The order of voluntary acts belongs to Moral Philosophy which is divided into three parts: the first considers an individual man's operations ordained to an end and is called *Monastic*; the second considers the operations of a domestic group and is called *Economic*; the third considers the operations of men in a city or state and is called *Political*.¹⁰ Of all these parts of philosophy Thomas has treated, each in its own sphere. Beginning with those which have most affinity with human reason, he gradually mounts until he reaches 'the topmost summit and crown of all things.'¹¹

St. Thomas's words on the power and value of the human mind are sacred. 'Our intellect naturally knows being and those things that essentially belong to being, and upon this knowledge the knowledge of first principles is founded.'¹² This phrase does away, root and branch, with the erroneous opinions of those modern philosophers who hold that, in the act of understanding, it is not *being* that is perceived, but a suggestion or impression of the percipient himself. These errors lead to *Agnosticism* which was so vigorously condemned in the Encyclical *Pascendi*.

The arguments that Thomas uses to prove the existence of God and to show that He is the One self-subsisting Being are as valid to-day as they were in the Middle Ages; and the Church's dogma, solemnly defined in the Vatican Council, most clearly confirms them. Pius X thus interprets them: 'That God, the beginning and end of all things, can be certainly

¹⁰ Ethic. Lect., I.

¹¹ Contra Gent. II, 56; IV, 1.

¹² Contra Gent. II, 83.

Blackfriars

known by the natural light of reason, through those things that are made, *i.e.* through the visible works of his creation, as a cause is known in its effects, is a fact that can be demonstrated.¹³ And although his metaphysical teachings have aroused the bitterness of hostile critics, yet they still retain their force and splendour like pure gold that no acid can dissolve or tarnish. Truly and wisely did our Predecessor say: 'To desert Aquinas, especially in his metaphysical teachings, is to risk disaster.'¹⁴

The most noble of human studies is philosophy; but in the present order of God's providence it cannot be said to excel every other study since it does not cover the whole order of God's creation. In his *Summa contra Gentes* and in the beginning of his *Summa Theologica*, the Holy Doctor describes another order of things above nature and beyond the grasp of reason, a sphere of which man would have had no inkling unless the Divine Goodness had revealed it to him. This is the region where Faith rules: the science of faith is called Theology. And this science will be the more perfect in any one in proportion as he is more deeply versed in the doctrines of faith,—and the fuller and more perfect will be his faculty for philosophising. There is no doubt that Theology reached the apex of its dignity in the works of Aquinas, who combined an absolute knowledge of divine things with a force of intellect wondrously fitted for philosophical argument. Wherefore, both in our schools of philosophy and Theology, St. Thomas holds the supreme mastership. In Theology there is no region into which his incredibly fruitful genius has not happily penetrated. He was the first to establish *Apologetics* upon a sound and genuine basis: he well defined the difference between faith and reason and accurately dis-

¹³ *Sacrorum Antistitum*, 1 Sep., MCMX.

¹⁴ *Pascendi*, 8 Sep., MCMVII.

Encyclical Letter

tinguished the natural from the supernatural order. The holy Vatican Council, in declaring the things that can be naturally known about religion, says, that in order to know all things certainly and without error some divine revelation was needed; but in order to know the mysteries of God, divine revelation was absolutely necessary; and, in framing its definitions, the Council has borrowed from the arguments of St. Thomas. Whoever undertakes to defend Christian doctrine should adopt this principle of St. Thomas: 'To give assent to the things of faith even though they be above reason is not a sign of shallowness or light-mindedness.'¹⁵ He shows that although the things of faith are difficult and obscure, nevertheless there are obvious and clear reasons why a man should believe them and that 'he would not believe them unless he saw that they ought to be believed.'¹⁶ He further adds that faith is not a hindrance or a yoke that enslaves: it is man's most priceless boon: 'faith is the beginning within us of eternal life.'¹⁷

Of that other part of theology, which deals with the interpretation of dogma, there is no wealthier nor more prolific author than Thomas. Nor has anyone ever pierced more deeply nor expounded with more subtlety the most august mysteries, such as the intimate life of God, the difficult problem of divine predestination, the supernatural ruling of the world, the power that helps rational creatures to attain their last end, the redemption of the human race achieved by Jesus Christ and continued in the Church by means of the Sacraments, both of which (Church and Sacraments) are called by the Angelic Doctor 'certain relics of the divine Incarnation.'

Likewise he reared up a solid fabric of moral theology which is eminently capable of directing man's

¹⁵ *Contra Gent.* I, 6.

¹⁶ *2a, 2ae*, I, 4.

¹⁷ *De Veritate*, XIV, 2.

Blackfriars

actions to their supernatural end. And since he is so clearly perfect in his theology, he gives secure reasons and precepts not only for the direction of man's individual life, but likewise for domestic and civil society. Thus he is our source for economic and political science. In the Second Part of his *Summa Theologica* he deals with paternal authority and family life, of the lawful authority in state or nation, of the law of nature and international law, of peace and war, justice and property, of laws and allegiance, of our duties to private individuals and the common good, and that in the natural as well as in the supernatural order. If in private, in public and in international relations all these things that Thomas lays down were kept holy and inviolate, nothing more would be needed to reconcile man to 'the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ' which the whole world so greatly desires. It is to be earnestly wished that those who deal with the problems of international law might consult Aquinas in their efforts to lay the foundation of what is called a *League of Nations*.

Nor is his ascetical and mystical science any less noble. He reduces the whole of moral discipline to the virtues and gifts, and he excellently defines the same method and discipline for various states of life, whether for those who follow the ordinary Christian life or for those who strive after consummate perfection, whether in a contemplative or active order. Therefore if we wish to understand the first Commandment and its extent and how charity and the accompanying gifts of the Holy Ghost increase, if we would know all the many states of life, for instance of perfection, the religious life, the apostolate, and in what they differ and what is their nature and force, if we are seeking to know these and such points of ascetic and mystical theology, we must first of all approach the Angelic Doctor.

Encyclical Letter

Whatever he composed, he accurately based and constructed upon Holy Writ. For, beginning with the belief that Scripture is in each and all of its parts the Word of God, he diligently used in its interpretation those laws which our Predecessors, Leo XIII, in his Encyclical Letter *Providentissimus Deus*, and Benedict XV, in his Encyclical Letter *Spiritus Paraclitus*, have sanctioned and approved. He laid it down as a principle that: 'The Principal Author of Scripture is the Holy Ghost . . . Man was the instrumental author.'¹⁸ Of the absolute historical authority of the Bible there can be no doubt, but, for the meaning of the words and the literal sense he based himself upon a rich and fruitful spiritual sense of which he explained there was a threefold division: the allegorical, tropological and anagogical.

Lastly, it was his singular gift to be able to turn his theological teaching into beautiful liturgical prayers and hymns. He has become the supreme poet and herald of the Eucharist. Wherever the Catholic Church exists, his hymns will be heard—those hymns which combine an emotional and prayerful piety with a perfect and unparalleled exposition of the doctrinal bearings of this august Sacrament which is chiefly called the *Mysterium Fidei*. None will therefore wonder that he has won for himself the title of the Eucharistic Doctor.

From the things we have already called to mind, we should like to gather some practical facts. First it behoves our young men, especially, to look to St. Thomas and to strive to imitate sedulously the great and beautiful virtues that shine forth in him. Before all, they should learn humility, which is the foundation of the spiritual life, and chastity. Let them learn from a man of sovereign genius and of sovereign doctrine to hold in horror all puffed-up pride of mind and to

¹⁸ *Quodlib*, VII, 14 ad 5.

Blackfriars

unite with their studies humble prayers for a full outpouring of the divine light. Let them learn from so great a master to fly with watchful care the fascinations of evil delight lest the eyes of their mind be dimmed to the perfect vision of truth. For St. Thomas confirms the perfect example of his own life by positive precept: 'If anyone refrains from bodily delights in order more freely to yield himself to the contemplation of truth, this belongs to rectitude of reason.'¹⁹ Wherefore we are warned in Holy Writ *Wisdom shall not enter into a sinful soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin* (Wisd. I, 4). If St. Thomas had not been victorious when his chastity was in peril, the Church would probably have had no Angelic Doctor. We sometimes see young men allured and ensnared by evil pleasures, despairfully forsaking holy purity and giving themselves up to the worst excesses; therefore, Venerable Brethren, it is our ardent wish that you should propagate, especially among youths destined for the priesthood, the *Society of the Angelic Warfare*, founded under the patronage of St. Thomas for the preservation of this holy virtue; and regarding this Society, we confirm all the indulgences granted by Benedict XIII and our Predecessors. In order to make it the more easy for anyone to be enrolled in this holy Society, we grant the faculty to members of wearing, instead of a cord, a medal bearing on one side a representation of St. Thomas being girded by angels and on the other Our Lady Queen of the Holy Rosary.

St. Thomas who wonderfully combined within himself wisdom, infused and acquired, who had recourse to prayer and fasting to help in the solution of his difficulties, who regarded the Crucifix as the source of all his learning and his most precious Book, has been fittingly chosen as the Patron of all Catholic schools. But he should be recommended, especially to young

¹⁹ 2a, 2ae, CLII, 2.

Encyclical Letter

men preparing for Orders, so that they may derive the greatest fruit from the highest of all possible studies. Members of the Religious Orders should look upon St. Thomas as a mirror of religious perfection. They should remember him as one who refused high dignities in order that he might live and die, humbly obedient in the holiness of his profession. And to all the faithful we would commend the example of his devotion to the Queen of Heaven whose Angelic Salutation he loved to recite and whose sweet Name he was accustomed to inscribe in the margins of his books, and also of his intense love for the Blessed Sacrament. We would remind priests that, as the writer of his Life says: 'Daily he would say Mass unless hindered by illness and he would hear another Mass which he frequently served.' But what words can describe the fervour and devotion with which he said Mass and rendered thanks to God afterwards?

In order to banish errors, in which lies the source of all the miseries of our time, we must cleave to the teachings of Aquinas more religiously and insistently than heretofore: for Thomas has altogether overthrown the modernists. In philosophy, as we have already said, he defends the power and validity of the human mind, proving with powerful arguments the existence of God. In matters of faith he distinguishes between the supernatural and the natural order, showing the motives for belief and explaining the dogmas themselves. In Theology he shows that what we accept by faith is not founded upon opinion, but upon unchangeable truth. In Biblical matters he delivers the genuine notion of divine inspiration. In social science and right he sets out the principles of social and legal justice (commutative and distributive), explaining the relationship between charity and justice. In ascetics and the science of Christian perfection he gives salutary counsels; and in his own day

Blackfriars

we know that he was a valiant defender of the Religious Orders against those who attacked them. Lastly against that freedom of thought, independent of God, which men commonly boast, he affirms the claims of the First Truth and God's supreme authority over us. It is not surprising that the modernists fear no Doctor of the Church more than they do Thomas Aquinas.

It was said of old to the Egyptians who were in need of corn, *Go to Joseph*; so to all who hunger for truth we would say, *Go to Thomas* for the food of sound doctrine that will sustain the soul unto everlasting life. For this food is easily accessible to all, witness the following testimony uttered during the process of his canonisation: 'Many doctors, religious and secular, have flourished upon the clear and luminous teaching of this Doctor because of its concise, clear and simple method. . . . Even the laity and the less learned in sacred science long to have his writings.'

We therefore wish all to take sedulous heed and to observe inviolate all that our Predecessors, especially Leo XIII²⁰ and Pius X²¹ have commanded, and also what we ourselves have already ordered; and this chiefly applies to those who hold positions of authority in the schools of higher studies for the clergy. Let them be assured that they will have done their duty and fulfilled our expectations when they have steeped themselves in the works of Aquinas and learnt to love him and communicated the same ardent love to their pupils and made them fit to arouse the same love in others.

Among the lovers of St. Thomas, as all sons of the Church engaged in higher studies should be, we long to see a healthy rivalry in study, provided there be none of those bitter recriminations which help not truth, but break the bonds of charity. The following canon of the Church's Code should be held as a sacred

²⁰ *Aeterni Patris.*

²¹ *Doctoris Angelici.*

Encyclical Letter

command: 'In the study of rational philosophy and Theology and in the instruction of the students, the professors should entirely follow the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor and hold them religiously,'²² and concerning this rule they should behave in a manner that entitles their calling him their Master. But let none expect from his neighbour more than the Church, the Teacher and Mother of all, expects from all; that is to say, in those matters wherein the Catholic schools are divided according to the contrary opinions of approved authors, no one is forbidden to follow the view that seems to him more probably true.

When we honour Thomas we concern ourselves not merely with an appreciation of Thomas himself, but with something far greater, namely the authority of the Church as Teacher. Since then the whole of Christendom ought to celebrate this centenary worthily, We greatly desire that this should be done throughout the whole world during the present year (that is to say from the 18th of July to the end of the year following). Wherever clerical students are being trained, and this not only amongst the Friars Preachers, whose Order, in the words of Benedict XV, 'is to be praised not so much for having raised up Thomas as for never afterwards having by a hair's breadth swerved from his teaching,'²³ but amongst all other religious Orders, in all clerical colleges and in all large Catholic schools and academies, to whom he has been assigned as Patron. It is fitting that this sacred city in which for a time Aquinas held the office of Master of the Sacred Palace, should take a leading part in the celebrations; and that foremost amongst all houses of study in their manifestations of holy joy should be the Pontifical *Collegio Angelico* (where Thomas may be said to have

²² Can. 1366, § 2.

²³ Act. Apost. Sedis., 1916, p. 397.

Blackfriars

his home) and the other Clerical training establishments in Rome.

To increase the brilliance and the fruits of this solemn festival, We grant the following privileges in virtue of our Apostolic authority :

(1) That in all churches of the Order of Preachers, and also in every church or chapel, open or accessible to the public, especially those of Seminaries, Colleges or houses for the education of youth, there should be devotions during a triduum, a week or a novena with all the pontifical indulgences which are usually to be gained on festivals of the Saints and Blessed in Heaven.

(2) That in churches of the Friars and Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic, it should be possible, on any one day during the celebrations, for all who have duly confessed their sins and received the Holy Eucharist to gain a plenary indulgence *toties quoties* for each visit to the altar of St. Thomas.

(3) That in churches of the Dominican Order, priests of the Order (including Tertiary priests) may on any Wednesday or on the first free day of the week throughout the year of the centenary, say the Mass of St. Thomas as prescribed for his feast, with or without *Gloria* and *Credo*, according to the liturgy of the day, and obtain a plenary indulgence on the usual conditions.

Further, there must be held in Seminaries and other houses of clerical study on some day within the whole of this time, a public disputation in philosophy or other serious study in honour of the Angelic Doctor. And henceforth, to observe the feast-day of St. Thomas, as befits the Patron of all Catholic schools, we wish that day to be a holyday from study, celebrated not only with High Mass but also—at least in Seminaries and religious houses—with a disputation such as we have just mentioned.

Encyclical Letter

Finally, in order that the studies of our students, with Aquinas for Master, may daily yield more and more fruit to the glory of God and the Church, we append to this Letter the form of prayer which he himself used, and we beg you to see that it is widely published. Whosoever recites it, let him know that for each recitation, an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is granted by authority.

As a pledge of God's blessing, and as a proof of our paternal good-will to you, Venerable Brethren, and to the clergy and people, entrusted to each of you, We affectionately impart the apostolic benediction.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the 29th day of June, on the feast of the Princes of the Apostles, in the year 1923, the second of our Pontificate.

PIUS PP. XI.

PRAYER.

Creator ineffabilis, qui de thesauris sapientiae tuae tres Angelorum hierarchias designasti, et eas super caelum empyreum miro ordine collocasti, atque universi partes elegantissime distribuisti; Tu, inquam, qui verus Fons Luminis et Sapientiae diceris, ac supereminens Principium, infundere digneris super intellectus mei tenebras, tuae radium claritatis, duplices, in quibus natus sum, a me demovens tenebras, peccatum scilicet, et ignorantiam. Tu, qui linguas infantium facis disertas, linguam meam erudias atque in labiis meis gratiam tuae benedictionis infundas. Da mihi intelligendi acumen, retinendi capacitatem, addiscendi modum et facilitatem, interpretandi subtilitatem, loquendi gratiam copiosam. Ingressum instruas, progressum dirigas, egressum compleas: Tu qui es verus Deus et homo, qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum. Amen.