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CATHOLIC ACTION

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A Thesis Presented to  
the Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of Systematic Theology

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity

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By  
Paul A. Zimmerman <sup>LAERT</sup> 1918-

May, 1944

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## CATHOLIC ACTION

### I. Introduction

Within the past few years it has become increasingly evident that the Catholic Church is initiating a vast new program. The name given this program is Catholic Action. The most prominent feature of Catholic Action is the fact that it aims at enlisting the laity as active agents for the advancement of the Roman Catholic Church. It is openly admitted by the Vatican that the clergy alone is not able to meet the challenge of the present day. Therefore, it is planned that the laity, under the supervision of the hierarchy, should take an active part in the promotion of Catholicism throughout the world. For non-Catholics the significance of this new program lies in the fact that Catholic Action represents on the part of Rome a new bid for power and influence, not only in things ecclesiastical, but also in the sphere of things social, economic, and political. According to well established policy the Catholic Church considers it its right and responsibility to rule in temporal affairs as well as in spiritual. Therefore, the Papacy today is striving through Catholic Action to condition the social and moral thinking of society so that the



leadership of the Catholic Church may eventually be accepted in every field of human activity. The tremendous implications of this program demand thorough study. In our discussion of Catholic Action we shall first trace the development of Catholic Action from its beginning to the present day. We shall then consider its theological bases. Finally, we shall examine and evaluate the organization of Catholic Action as it exists in our own country.



## II. The Need of the Catholic Church for a New Program.

The position that the Roman Catholic Church holds today is in striking contrast to that which it enjoyed during the Middle Ages. Once the Pope of Rome was supreme. The Pope was, in fact, a powerful civil ruler, while Catholicism was the only accepted religion. Then came the Renaissance, Humanism, the rising tide of nationalism, the hammer blows of Luther's Reformation. Both the temporal and the ecclesiastical power of the Catholic Church waned. With the Counter-Reformation came a resurgence of power, but never again did the Papacy climb to the dizzy heights that it once so proudly occupied. Since the day of Reformation and Counter-Reformation the fortunes of the Papacy have varied. In the year 1860, however, a new chain of events began to unroll, events unfavorable to the Roman Catholic Church. Since that time an ever increasing number of problems have arrayed themselves against the Papacy. They have been grave problems, so grave, in fact, that they resulted in the Vatican initiating an entirely new program, namely Catholic Action. To understand this new movement we must begin our study at its very source. We must go back to the problems which the Roman Catholic Church faced in 1860 and succeeding years. By viewing the fire in which the new weapon was forged we



shall gain a more complete understanding of the weapon as it presents itself today.

### 1. The Problem of Political Reverses.

The problem that faced the Vatican in the middle of the last century was that of political reverses. The Papacy had suffered severe territorial losses at the time of the French Revolution and during the time of the Napoleonic era in France and in Germany. Eventually, however, the Papal States in the center of Italy had been restored. Then came the unification of Italy. Under the leadership of nationalists like Victor Immanuel, Cavour, Mazzini, and Garibaldi the Papal States were confiscated. In the year 1860 approximately three-fourths of the Papal States were incorporated into the new Kingdom of Italy. Ten years later, September 20, 1870, the last Papal State, Rome, met the same fate. This came as a severe blow to the prestige of the Vatican. The Popes had long declared that it was necessary for the Papacy to exist as sovereign of an independent state in order to do the work of the Church freely, without coercion.<sup>1</sup> Nor did the Vatican fail to show its supreme disapproval. After the confiscation the Pope termed himself the "Prisoner of the Vatican." For many

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1. Cf. Leo XIII. Immortale Dei, p.431: "And assuredly all ought to hold that it was not without a singular disposition of God's providence, that this power of the Church was provided with a civil sovereignty as the surest safeguard of her independence."



years the Roman Pontiffs refused to appear in a public ceremony. The Papal sovereignty was finally restored in 1929 by Mussolini's government.<sup>2</sup> But the greater part of the territory was not returned. Although the Pope received a handsome indemnity from the Italian government, the territory received again included only Vatican City, an area, in all, of less than a square mile.

During these years the political situation outside Italy was scarcely any more favorable to the Roman Church. Following the World War the Catholic Church openly entered European politics. Political blocs were formed in Germany, Austria, France, and Italy. These were the now famous "Center Parties." There has been considerable discussion as to whether or not these parties were actually agencies of the Church. Actually they were, but the Vatican denied it, particularly in connection with the party in Italy. William Teeling, modern American Catholic writer, says: "The Church denied not once, but a hundred times, that the Popular Party was actually the Catholic Party, but for all practical purposes this was the case."<sup>3</sup> These Center Parties failed however. Partly because they became purely political and partly for other reasons they were of little value to the Church.

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2. Cf: Pius XI's Encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno for a discussion of his controversy with Mussolini.

3. Pope Pius XI and World Affairs. p.121.



But what of the present day? Has the Papacy recovered from these blows at its political prestige? There are many who feel that the Catholic Church is actually gaining in political affluence, particularly in America. They point to the deference that President Roosevelt had shown the Papacy. They recall, for instance, that when Cardinal Mundelein traveled to Rome in 1939 by order of the President, the American ambassador met him at Naples at the wharf on the occasion of his disembarkation. When the same prelate died, the flag on the Federal Building in Chicago, the home of the Cardinal, was lowered to half mast, again by order of the President.<sup>4</sup> A year later Myron Taylor, the personal representative of the President, was sent to Rome invested with his high office by the Secretary of State and holding the rank of ambassador.<sup>5</sup> These honors must be of comparatively little consolation to the Papacy, however, in view of the genuine political opposition that Rome is now experiencing in the world at large. There is general criticism of the part that Papal foreign policy has played in recent years. It is pointed out that the Papacy made no effort to censure Mussolini for the brutal conquest of Ethiopia. As Gohdes says: "If the Pope has the duty to judge nations and kings, the rape of Ethiopia gave him the opportunity to vent holy

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4. Gohdes, C.B. Does the Modern Papacy Require a New Evaluation? p.5.

5. Time. XXXV ( Jan.1,1940) p.1.



wrath upon the offender. But to do so would have been bad politics."<sup>6</sup> The part that Catholic foreign policy played during the Spanish revolution of the last decade has also been subjected to criticism. It has been shown that Franco, the Fascist leader, was favored by Catholic leaders. Franco's machine guns were blessed by Catholic prelates. The Pope himself gave his blessing to Franco, saluting him as the representative of the Spanish faith. Moreover, the Spanish hierarchy itself joined the revolt in 1937 by issuing a pastoral letter on its behalf.<sup>7</sup> This year, in the opening week of February, Russia publicly attacked the Vatican. Writing in the official Soviet newspaper Izvestia, Dmitri Petrov charged that, "The Vatican has assumed the position of direct accomplice of Fascism." He called Pope Pius XII pro-Fascist and added, "No wonder hate of Hitler and Mussolini now also includes the Vatican."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, looking at the situation from the other point of view, it must be conceded that the belligerents in the present war have paid no attention to the suggestions of Pope Pius XII. Appeals to end the war, adopt the Pope's new order, accept the Vatican's "Peace Points," — all have gone unheeded. Thus it becomes quite obvious to the unbiased observer that the Papacy has definitely not recovered from the political reverses experienced in the last century and prior to that. But it is also

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6. op.cit. p.91.

7. Ibid. pp.91-92.

8. St. Louis Post Dispatch. Feb.3,1944.



evident that what Catholic authors have said of Pope Pius XI is also true of the present Pope, Pius XII: "From the moment Pope Pius XI succeeded to the Throne of St. Peter he made every effort to increase the influence of the Vatican in international affairs."<sup>9</sup> Rome is acutely conscious of her political problem and is anxious to find a solution.

## 2. The Problem of Modern Trends.

Now let us proceed to the second great problem facing the Catholic Church: certain modern trends which, acting together, have lessened the prestige of Rome. The first of these is the direction that modern society as a whole has taken toward godlessness. In America and in Europe there have been wars between nations, bitter struggles between capital and labor, disorders in family life, and spiritual maladies of every kind. Modern sociology, psychology, and even religion have shown a marked tendency toward agnosticism, materialism, and determinism. In politics there looms the ever present threat of atheistic communism. There is no doubt that such conditions come as a problem to all Christian Churches. The Papacy has been swift to appraise the situation as grave. In his Encyclical Ubi Arcano Pius XI writes: "The Christian ideal of life has all but disappeared from many regions, and human society, far

9. Teeling. op.cit. pp.107.



from advancing on the vaunted way of progress, seems rather to be returning to the wilds of barbarism."<sup>10</sup>

Another modern trend, and one that has threatened the Catholic Church particularly in past years, is urbanization in the United States. One can readily see the implications of urbanization for Rome when one reflects upon two facts. One is that the Catholic Church has most of its strength concentrated in the cities. The second is that city populations quite generally are unable to perpetuate themselves. City populations die out. They are dependent upon the rural areas, where Catholics are comparatively weak. Theodore Maynard draws the conclusion in his Story of American Catholicism: "All this is very ominous for the future of the Catholic Church in America. What we see is that our cities have a huge Catholic population, while the country has a comparatively small number. What we miss seeing is that the cities have constantly to be replenished with new blood from the country districts, and that these are unable to supply Catholics in any considerable numbers. The conclusion is inescapable; within a few generations a very serious situation will confront the Church, which is no longer able to fill up its ranks by immigration, and must therefore expect a sharp decline should present statistical trends continue." <sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>.Husslein, Joseph. Social Wellsprings. II. pp.9.

<sup>11</sup>.Maynard, Theodore. Story of American Catholicism. pp. 454.



Large cities offer the Catholic Church even more immediate problems, however. It is difficult, if not absolutely impossible, for the parish priest to maintain the necessary contact with the people of his city parish. In large parishes he has difficulty learning to know the regular members. He is handicapped in trying to win the estranged, the lukewarm, and the fallen. He is largely unable to contact Catholics who move into the city from foreign countries or from other parts of the United States. Little time or opportunity is left him for mission work among the non-Catholics. One prominent Catholic writer has this to say concerning the situation: "Many are the Catholics who know their parish priest only from seeing him in church, hearing him preach, receiving the sacraments from him. Hundreds never meet him personally. Many never know the names of the assistant priests or what is going on in the parish... The conditions of our modern cities present such trying difficulties to the pastoral ministry that it is impossible for the average parish priest to establish personal contacts with every man, woman, and child in his parish... A solution must be found to remedy this situation."<sup>12</sup>

### 3. The Problem of Internal Discord.

Adding to these difficulties which developments outside the Church in society have presented there is the problem of discord within the Church itself. During the

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<sup>12</sup>. Harbrecht, John. The Lay Apostolate. pp. 6, 113.



last two decades of the nineteenth century two scholars of the Catholic Institute of Paris, Alfred Loisy and Louis Duschene, began to employ radical historical criticism in the treatment of Biblical and ecclesiastical material.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence they made certain modifications in dealing with the traditional Catholic position and found the ultimate decisions of certain important questions in critical scholarship rather than in ecclesiastical pronouncements. The ideas of Loisy and Duschene gained a foothold among Catholic scholars. Their approach to theology was soon being advocated in other countries. In England Father George Tyrell, and in Italy Romalo Murri were the leading proponents of this type of historical criticism.<sup>14</sup> As a result Pope, Leo XIII was forced to appoint a commission on biblical studies to formulate approved Catholic principles in this realm and in other ways to bring official pressure to bear upon Catholic teachers. When Pius X succeeded to the Papacy, he took more vigorous action. In 1903 he condemned five of Loisy's books. On July 3, 1907 he issued the decree Lamentabili Sane Exitu, condemning sixtyfive propositions. Loisy admitted the propositions to represent his teaching and rose to their defense. The same year, on September 8, Pius issued the Encyclical Pascendi Dominici Regis. This Encyclical gave the name "Modernism" to the movement that

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13. Loisy died 1941.

14. Smith, G.B. "Modernism," Dictionary of Religion and Ethics. pp. 289.



Loisy headed and termed it "the synthesis of all heresies."<sup>15</sup>  
 Other repressive measures were adopted, so that in a few  
 years all the Modernists were either silenced or forced  
 to withdraw from the Roman Church. But the controversy  
 itself was a blow at the internal harmony of the Church.<sup>16</sup>

Less generally known, but also pertinent to our  
 topic, is what is known as the "American Heresy." In the  
 apostolic letter Testem Benevolentiae addressed to Cardinal  
 Gibbons on January 22, 1899, Pope Leo XIII linked with  
 the "Modernism" of France a trend which he called "Americanism."  
 Maynard, the Catholic author, holds, however, that other

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15. *ibid.*

16. Gerald B. Smith summarizes the content of Catholic  
 "Modernism" as follows: "While Modernism makes significant  
 modifications in the doctrine of Catholicism, its most  
 important feature is its adoption of critical scholarship  
 as the ultimate court of appeal. This is made clear in  
 the notable document, the Programme of the Modernists,  
 anonymously issued in reply to the Papal Encyclical.  
 Modernism treats Christianity as a historical movement,  
 beginning as a Jewish messianic faith attached to the  
 person of Christ, subsequently developing under Hellenistic  
 influences into the system of doctrine which the Catholic  
 Church administered through the Middle Ages. Modern science  
 makes imperative a further development of Christian ideas.  
 Thus in the place of a system originally communicated to  
 the church in perfection, the modernist contends we have a  
 Christian ideal ceaselessly developing in human history.  
 The self-identity of this ideal under changing forms  
 constitutes the unity of true Catholicism. The Modernist  
 thus regards external doctrines and rites as merely relative.  
 The Papal Encyclical insists that this would mean the end  
 of the authority of the Catholic Church."...op.cit. pp.289-290.



considerations were more prominent in the mind of the Pontiff at the time. He writes: "Rome, of course, had not forgotten the history of the American Church but knew that underlying were some extravagant notions as to what was implied by American liberty. That particular fire had been quenched, but perhaps faggots had been left lying around and perhaps they could easily be rekindled. Americans had shown from time to time a belligerent nationalism and the captains of the Church in the United States had spoken so strongly about the civic ideas of their country, so strongly also about the desirability of the separation of Church and State as a practical advantage — that not without reason were many Roman officials uneasy."<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. The Problem of Competition.

The list of problems is still by no means complete. In appraising the difficulties that the Catholic Church has faced during the past eighty-four years and is facing today the factor of competition from Protestantism must be considered. This competition in the United States has long been a potent force. But of late it has begun to make itself felt effectively also in South America. Protestant missions there have made such great strides that the Catholics are thoroughly alarmed. Luis Alberto Sanchez, of the University of Chili, wrote last winter in Christendom:

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<sup>17</sup>. Maynard. op.cit. pp.501.



"It was about 1928 or, to be more exact, towards 1930, that the religious problem took more definite shape. The advance of Protestant missions had the effect of awakening Catholic youth from their slumber and of making them resolve to act in a more positive way."<sup>18</sup> He adds: "The growth of the Evangelical movement has stimulated the Catholics to purify themselves, to face their essential problem, and to recover their catechistic enterprise."<sup>19</sup> Mr. Miguel Rizzo, Jr., a native of Brazil, writing in the Christian Century last year, reported that Catholicism was losing ground fast in that country, while Protestantism was advancing with great strides. The fact that this loss is regarded as a serious problem by Rome is illustrated by an incident related in the same article: "A good friend of mine, who is a leading Catholic layman in his section of the country, told me that his city had profited greatly by the work of the Evangelical. At my expression of surprise, he explained playfully, 'When your folks opened work in my town, the bishop was obliged to send us the best priest in the whole district.'"<sup>20</sup> That a similar situation exists in Peru also is shown by the fact that on March 11, 1944 a Joint Pastoral was issued by the Peruvian Hierarchy against Protestantism. The Pastoral states: "A common and grave danger seriously threatens the purity and unity of our religious faith...We mean Protestant propaganda."<sup>21</sup> But even more

18. Sanchez, Luis A. Christendom. (Winter, 1944) pp. 41.

19. Ibid.

20. Rizzo, Miguel, Jr. Christian Century. (March 31, 1943).

21. Anonymous. Christian Beacon IX; 8 (March 30, 1944) pp. 1



indicative of Rome's concern of Rome's concern over this competition is the fact that the Catholic Church has officially protested to the United States State Department against the the sending of Protestant missionaries to South America.<sup>22</sup>

[ It is to be noted that the Catholic Church is aware too of the serious competition offered by the provisions for the social life of the people by many Protestant churches and religious groups. Harbrecht states: "The parish priest is very often confronted with the problem of shielding and protecting his parishioners from sectarian influences. Furthermore there arises the problem of competition, in the sense that the Catholic parish must also contribute its share to community activities."<sup>23</sup> *The Modern Apostolate* He then points out the serious competition presented by the YMCA, church club-room, gymnasias, etc. ]

22. Anonymous. "Roman Catholic Tolerance." The Presbyterian Guardian. (December 25, 1942.) pp.361.

Cf. also the statement of C.J. Stratman in Catholic World (June, 1943) pp. 236 ff.: "No permanent or lasting policy of 'Good Neighborism' can be fully developed until the United States realizes that the cultural background of Hispanic America is predominantly Catholic. No permanent or lasting understanding can be developed between the America until the United States realizes the present position of the Catholic Church in the Latin American Republics, and acts accordingly... Another indication of the Catholicism of South America is the hastily constructed barriers of immigration to prevent the entrance of Protestant missionaries, fleeing from Japan and the Orient. For many years Protestant missionaries have been a thorn in the side of Latin America, not only because of their officious missionary work, but also because of their political meddling. Often, from the heathen fields of the Orient, the Protestant missionaries arrived in Latin America, without considering whether the Latin Americans had ever had Christianity in their Republics. They were bringing Christianity with them. Full of a misguided zeal they began to teach the true doctrines of salvation, as if Christianity were unknown, and the people little better than ignorant savages in the matters of religion."

23. Harbrech. op.cit. pp.110-111.



## 5. The Problem of Formalism and Indifference.

The greatest problem of all, however, arises from the nature of Catholic theology itself. The sacerdotalism of the Roman Church has made the priest a go-between connecting man with God. Thus the laity has been robbed of all personal interest in salvation. Furthermore, sacramentalism, as taught in Catholic theology, declares that the sacraments are effective *ex opere operato*. Thus again personal interest in religion is discouraged and a mechanism of religious life put in its place. As a result of this type of theology a dead formalism has developed within the Church. Through the years this has proceeded to a point where it threatens the very existence of the Church if allowed to continue unchecked. A classic example of what can happen is to be found in Spain, a predominantly Catholic country. Cardinal Goma, Archbishop of Toledo, Primate of Spain, recently issued a pastoral letter which the Franco government did not permit to circulate because the picture of conditions was too depressingly gloomy. In the suppressed pastoral we read: "We do not need to affirm that Catholicism within Spain has been in a state of decayedness for a long time. We are not speaking of the present feverish times, but of the slow continuing movement toward indifference."...In some districts "only five percent of the men and twenty percent of the women can be counted among the faithful."<sup>24</sup>

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24. Lord David. Christian Century.



A similar report has been issued concerning Chili, another Catholic country. The Jesuit Alberto Hurtado states: "Not more than five or six percent of the masculine population of Chili really professes Catholicism, and only fourteen percent of the feminine population."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Catholic authors are free to admit that a similar is taking form in the United States, a place where, because of Protestant competition, it is an ever more serious problem for the Papacy. The Franciscan friar David Baier states: "Catholic life for millions has become a passive thing...a having something done for one by someone else."<sup>26</sup> In the Lenten Pastoral of the Chilean Hierarchy, 1937, we read this judgment: "How lamentable that the greater part of the faithful lack even the most elemental notion of the intimate participation which should be theirs in the liturgical life of the Church!"<sup>27</sup> An Illinois priest adds his assent, writing in the Ecclesiastical Review: "Watch your congregation at any Sunday Mass and you will come back with a heavy heart. About ten percent use a prayer book. The other ninety percent lean comfortably against the seat behind them and just stare vacantly; many add one fervent prayer, 'I hope to heaven it doesn't last too long.'"<sup>28</sup> We could continue to multiply examples. But there is no need. The principal fact is clear enough: The Roman Church is faced with dry-rot in the ranks of its laity.

<sup>25</sup>. Hurtado, Alberto. Is Chili a Catholic Country? Quoted in Lutheran Witness LXIII:7 (March 28, 1944) pp.98.

<sup>26</sup>. Maynard. op.cit. pp.605.

<sup>27</sup>. Ellard, G. Men at Work at Worship. p.317.

<sup>28</sup>. Schumacher, Msgr. "Praying the Mass." Eccl. Rev. C. (1939) pp.338.



## 6. The Problem of defections.

It is but inevitable that these conditions should show their effects in a dropping off of the membership of the Catholic Church. Statistics covering the period under consideration show a picture that is most unfavorable to Rome. Bishop England, of Charleston, South Carolina, in a letter to the central office of the Faith, Lyons, France, in 1846 estimated the number of Catholics who had lost the faith in the fifty years previous at 3,750,000. The Abbe Villeneuve, at the Catholic Congress of Liege in 1890, spoke of a loss of 20,000,000. Bishop McFaul, of Trenton, asserted in 1904 that the Church had lost some 30,000,000 members in the United States alone.<sup>29</sup> The Jesuit magazine America in 1939 admitted an overall leakage of more than 43,000,000 from the Catholic religion in the United States. The same issue reported that 63,000 baptized Catholics abandoned the faith in this country every year.<sup>30</sup> A most interesting study was carried out and reported in the December, 1931 issue of the Catholic periodical Ecclesiastical Review. Census reports indicated that the Catholic population in the United States for 1930 was 20,091,593. This represented a gain of 13,391 over the previous year. During the same year there were 39,528 converts made, a gain of 1,296 over the former year. This appeared to be slightly encouraging. However, the survey went on to estimate

29. Harbrecht. op.cit. pp. 106.

30. Anonymous. Converted Catholic ( Jan., 1942) pp.39.



that during that year approximately 60,000 Catholic immigrants had entered the country. Moreover, the twenty million Catholics in this country were reported to have reproduced at a rate four and one half times that of the non-Catholic population. Adding the estimated number of births, the number of converts, and the number of immigrants, the sum of 522,115 is reached. This sum represents the gain in membership during the year. Yet the census reports a gain of only 13,391. The author of the article concludes: "The chief significance of all these statistics is that while gaining 39,528 converts last year (1929), the Church lost over half a million born Catholics. In other words, the number of defections has been so great that it has counterbalanced the annual increase by birth and practically kept us at a standstill."<sup>31</sup> I do not believe that it is necessary to comment on the problem that such a situation presents to the Church of Rome. It is worth noting in addition, however, that during the year that the Catholics were gaining 39,528 converts, the Lutherans, according to the same survey, gained 56,180 converts.<sup>32</sup>

\*\*\*\*\* skip to p. 56

Loss in political prestige, hostile trends in society, internal discord and disunity, intense competition from Protestantism, a huge number of defections from the faith — these are the problems that the Papacy has had

31. O'Brien, J.A. "Did We Lose Half a Million Catholics Last Year?" Ecclesiastical Review. LXXXV (Dec., 1931) pp. 580ff.  
 32. It is to be noted that these figures fall within the era prior to the introduction of Catholic Action in this country. The situation obtaining today will be studied when the progress of Catholic Action is evaluated.



to deal with during the past hundred years. Each individual problem was serious in its own right. But taken together they constituted a deadly threat to the Catholic Church. It became obvious to the Vatican that some new program would have to be developed to meet this threatening situation. The Vatican devised such a new program and called it "Catholic Action." We shall now turn to a study of the official declarations of the Popes from Leo XIII to the present Pope, Pius XII. In these declarations we can trace the evolution of Catholic Action. We shall see how Leo XIII reasserted the right of the Catholic Church to lay down the principles according to which all of society is to function. Politics, economics, social relations — all are to conform to Roman Catholic ethics. Then came Pius X who realized that the vast resources of lay assistance must be tapped if this ideal was to be achieved. Accordingly, he fostered the liturgical movement which aims at increasing the zeal of the laity for the work of the Church. Thus Pius X, as well as his successor Benedict XV, strove to implement the new program of the Church. With Benedict's successor, Pius XI, came the clear definition of Catholic Action. He combined and expanded the ideas of his predecessors. The laity was directed to assist in the work of the Church in every phase of its activity. Ways and means, plans and objectives — all were delineated in detail. Thus Pius XII upon his succession found the definition of the Church's



new program, Catholic Action, completed. For him and his successors there remains only the task of executing the plans. But let us turn now to a closer study of the Papal declarations that brought Catholic Action into being.



### III. PAPAL DECLARATIONS

FROM LEO XIII TO PIUS XII ( 1878-1944 )

#### The Forging of the New Weapon

#### 1. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903)

Leo XIII was the first Pope to ascend the "Throne of St. Peter" after the confiscation of the Papal States. He gave himself over wholeheartedly to the task of re-establishing the prestige and influence of the Vatican.<sup>1</sup> To achieve this he enunciated once more the principle of Boniface VIII's famous bull Unam Sanctam, namely, that it is a part of the work of the Church to supervise secular affairs.<sup>2</sup> Leo XIII made very clear that he as Pope had

1. Cf. Schmidlin, Josef. Papstgeschichte der Neusten Zeit. II. pp.354. "Er (Leo XIII) suchte neben seinen territorialen Restitutionsforderungen die internationale Stellung und das kirchenpolitische Ansehen der römischen Kurie in moderner Form als kulturelles Prinzipat wieder aufzurichten, indem er auf geistigem wie geistlichem Gebiet die Völker und ihre Häupter zur freiwilligen Beugung unter die Autorität des päpstlichen Primats bewog."

2. The Bull Unam Sanctam was issued by Pope Boniface VIII in 1303. The following propositions summarize its contents: " 1) It is necessary to salvation that every man should submit to the Pope. 2) This is a necessary consequence of the dogma of Papal supremacy. 3) It condemns the assertion by the State of any power of the Church property. 4) The temporal power of Christian princes does not exempt them from obedience to the head of the church. 5) The material sword is drawn for the Church, the spiritual by the Church. 6) The material sword must cooperate with the spiritual and assist it.



the authority to make general rules governing political, economic, and social affairs. It is important to realize that the encyclicals of Leo XIII which do speak of such political, economic, and social matters are the textbooks of Catholic Action today. As we turn now to a study of Leo's official declarations we shall find the platform of Catholic Action's present program. What Leo enunciated as the ideal, Catholic Action now strives to make reality.

On November 1, 1885 Leo XIII issued the encyclical letter Immortale Dei (The Christian Constitution of States). This encyclical begins with the statement that God is the author of society and the source of all civil authority.

(continued from p. 22) "7) The secular power should be guided by the spiritual, as the higher. 8) The spiritual has the preeminence over the material. 9) The temporal power is subordinate to the ecclesiastical, as to the higher. 10) The temporal power, if it is not good, is judged by the spiritual. 11) To the ecclesiastical authority (that is, to the Pope and his hierarchy) the words of the prophet Jeremiah apply: 'Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over the kingdoms to root up and pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant.' 12) When the temporal power goes astray, it is judged by the spiritual. 13) For obtaining eternal happiness, each one is required to submit to the Pope. 14) The supremacy of the Pope, even in temporal things, is to be enforced. 15) The Pope recognizes human authorities in their proper place, until they lift their will against God." — Engelder, Arndt, Graebner, Mayer. Popular Symbolics. pp. 164-165.

Unam Sanctam closes with the famous sentence: "Porro subesse Romano pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus, dicimus, definimus et pronunciamus, omino esse salutis." (Moreover, we maintain, declare, define, and make clear to every human creature that subjection to the Roman pontiff is altogether necessary to salvation.) — Gohdes. op.cit. pp. 24.



But Leo proceeds to certain other statements which are typical of the Roman doctrine of the supremacy of the Church over the State. 1) He holds that the State is bound to a public profession of religion. This religion is, of course, to be the "true religion", i.e. the Roman Catholic faith. 2) Leo then attacks the democratic principle that the source of the government's power rests with the people.

He states boldly:

"Sad it is to call to mind how the harmful and lamentable rage for innovation which rose to a climax in the sixteenth century threw first of all into confusion the Christian religion, and next, by natural sequence, invaded the precincts of philosophy, whence it spread amongst all classes of society. From this source as from a fountainhead, burst forth all those later tenets of unbridled license which, in the midst of the terrible upheavals of the last century were wildly conceived and boldly proclaimed as the principles and foundation of that new jurisprudence which was not merely previously unknown, but was at variance on many points with not only the Christian, but even with the natural law. Among these principles the main one lays down that as all men are alike by race and nature, so in like manner all are equal in the control of their life; that each one is so far his own master as to be in no sense under the rule of any other individual; that each is free to think on every subject just as he may choose, and to do whatever he may like to do; that no man has any right to rule over other men. In a society grounded upon such maxims, all government is nothing more nor less than the will of the people, and the people, being under the power of itself alone, is alone its own rule... The sovereignty of the people, however, and this without any reference to God, is held to reside in the multitude,



which is doubtless a doctrine well calculated to flatter and to inflame many passions, but which lacks all reasonable proof, and all power of insuring public safety and preserving order."<sup>3</sup>

3) Having condemned the democratic principle so thoroughly,

Leo launches an attack against the religious liberty

which obtains in democratic states. He writes:

" And since the populace is declared to contain within itself the spring-head of all rights and all power, it follows that the State does not consider itself bound by any duty toward God. Moreover, it believes that it is not obliged to make a public profession of any religion; or to inquire which of the very many religions is the only true one, or to prefer one religion to all the rest; or to show to any form of religion special favor; but, on the contrary, is bound to grant equal rights to every creed, so that public order may not be disturbed by any particular form of religious belief."<sup>4</sup>

4) In the same encyclical Leo attacks the freedom of the press. He states:

"So, too, the liberty of thinking, and of publishing, whatsoever one likes, without any hindrance, is not in itself an advantage over which society can wisely rejoice."<sup>5</sup>

3. Leo XIII. Immortale Dei. America Press. pp.436-438.

4. ibid. Note also that Leo recalls the Encyclical Letter Mirari Vos, August 15, 1832, in which Gregory XVI wrote "against the sophisms which even in his time were being publicly inculcated—namely, that no preference should be shown for any particular form of worship; that it is right for individuals to form their own personal judgments about religion, that each man's conscience is his sole and all-sufficing guide; and that it is lawful for every man to publish his own views, whatever they may be and even to conspire against the State." — Ibid. p.441.

5. Ibid. pp.439.



5) As a means of spreading Catholicism Leo XIII advocated compulsory religious instruction in the schools.<sup>6</sup> He writes:

"It is also of great moment to the public welfare to take a prudent part in the business of municipal administration, and to endeavor above all to introduce effectual measures, so that, as becomes a Christian people, public provision may be made for the instruction of youth in religion and true morality."<sup>7</sup>

6) In the latter part of the encyclical Leo urges the individual members of his religion that, "It is in general fitting and salutary that Catholics should extend their efforts beyond this restricted sphere (of municipal affairs) and give their attention to national politics."<sup>8</sup>

It is evident from these statements of Immortale Dei that the Catholic Church also today seeks to use the power of the State as a tool in furthering the interests of Catholicism. Secular power is expected to recognize the Roman Catholic faith as the one true religion and to make itself subservient to the wishes of the Papacy. The energies of education, the press, radio, the cinema, and all other media of public instruction are to be harnessed so as to work only for the spread of Catholicism. Present day Catholics are being urged to bring this about. This is very definitely one of the aims of Catholic Action.

The next step for Leo XIII was to assert the

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6. This refers to the Catholic religion. "Religion" in the encyclicals always means the "true religion", i.e. Catholicism.

7. Leo XIII. op.cit. pp. 445.

8. Ibid. pp.446-447.



authority of the Church to judge on social and economic problems. On May 15, 1891, he published his most famous encyclical Rerum Novarum (The Condition of Labor). Rerum Novarum is one of a series of social encyclicals that flowed from Leo's pen. Others are: Libertas Praestantissimum (Human Liberty), Graves de Communi (Christian Democracy), and Sapientiae Christianae (Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens). Rerum Novarum, however, stands as the great model for all later Papal social encyclicals. In its broad sweep the entire attitude of the Catholic Church over against the social-economic problem is clearly outlined. As one Catholic author states; "From this document in particular contemporary Catholic social activity had its impetus."<sup>9</sup>

The fundamental principle underlying Rerum Novarum is that the Church offers the only solution for the social-economic problems of the world today. Leo holds that if all men were to live according to the ethics of true religion, all strife and oppression would vanish from society. In view of this he takes it to be the sacred duty of the Catholic Church to be concerned, not only with the eternal welfare of the souls of men, but also to offer its solution for the social and economic problems of men today. Leo asserts in the encyclical itself:

" No practical solution of this( the

9. Attwater, Donald. Dictionary of the Popes. pp. 314.



economic) question will ever be found without the assistance of Religion and the Church...We affirm without hesitation that all the striving of men will be in vain if they leave out the Church...The Church uses its efforts not only to enlighten the mind, but to direct by its precepts the life and conduct of men...If Society is to be cured now, in no other way can it be cured but by a return to the Christian life and Christian institutions." 10

Rerum Novarum sets forth the conditions of a perfect social life, which are the aims of the Papal program. Leo calls for peace and order, respect for the rights of the individual, the preservation of family life in full harmony with God's laws, the reverence of religion, a high standard of morality both in public and in private life, respect for the sanctity of justice, preservation of public peace also in industry, the elimination of industrial evils, and the reign of the Church's ethics in all of society.

The encyclical is quite specific in defining the program which is to be followed to achieve these ends. Leo asserts in the very beginning of the encyclical the principle that every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own. Then follows a detailed proof offered in defense of this principle. He holds that it is, first of all, one of those factors which distinguish man from the animal creation.

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10. Leo XIII. "Rerum Novarum" Five Great Encyclicals. pp 7,13.

— This statement concerning the necessity of a return to Christian principles finds ready agreement with us, as do many of the statements of Rome on social and economic problems. However, by a return to Christian institutions Leo means a return to a universal Catholicism where the Church leaves its rightful sphere of activity and dictates in secular matters. Cf: Section on Social Gospel under the "Theology of Catholic Action."



Then follows that it is in accord with reason that when a man spends the industry of his mind and body in procuring the fruits of nature, by that act he makes his own that portion of nature's field which he cultivates. Finally, Leo asserts that the right of private property must also belong to a man as the head of a family for which he must provide.

The encyclical includes a scathing denunciation of Socialism. Leo declaims; "The idea, then, that the civil government should, at its own discretion, penetrate and pervade the family and the household, is a great and pernicious mistake... It is clear that the main tenet of Socialism, the community of goods must be utterly rejected, for it would injure those whom it is intended to benefit, it would be contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and it would introduce confusion and disorder into the common-wealth."<sup>11</sup>

Then come the positive suggestions of Leo. He enunciates the principle that the employer is divinely bound to make the right use of his money by using it for the perfecting of his own nature and," as the minister of God's providence,"<sup>12</sup> for the benefit of others. He upholds the dignity of labor and the rights of the individual working man and his family. For their protection the State may at

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11. Ibid. pp.6,7.

12. Ibid. p.11.



any time intervene to preserve justice and halt oppression.<sup>13</sup> Hours of labor are to be limited to prevent injury to the health of individuals. Women and children are to be protected from the industrial system. Children ought not be employed before reaching a proper age. Women ought preferably remain in the home. However, when employed, women should be given only light tasks. Just wages should be paid. Whenever possible, the working man should own his own property. Unions are to be encouraged and organized strongly. Both employer and employee are to conduct themselves with an eye to the hereafter and the divine reckoning they will have to face.

From this discussion it will be seen that Rerum Novarum outlines in detail the ideal of an industrial society based on Roman Catholic ethics. Leo XIII was anxious to see this ideal put into practice. He termed the program for accomplishing this "Social Action." We shall see how succeeding Popes pursued this same social-economic-political program. The only really new feature found in their declarations is the implementation of this program by the introduction of lay cooperation. As we shall see

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13. Cf. the definition of "State" in Rerum Novarum. p.15: "By the State we understand, not the particular form of government which prevails in this or that nation, but the State as rightly understood; that is to say, any government conformable in its institutions to right reason and natural law, and to those dictates of the Divine wisdom which We have expounded in the encyclical on the Christian Constitution of The State (Immortale Dei)."



later, Catholic Action is nothing but the laity working with the hierarchy to further the spread of the Catholic faith and of "Social Action."

It may be shown, however, that Leo XIII already was thinking of how he could best implement his program of Social Action. He found part of the answer in establishing a philosophical basis for Social Action. In Roman Catholic thinking social philosophy flows from moral philosophy. If sociology is to be correct, moral philosophy must be properly grounded. Rome derives its moral philosophy from Scholasticism. Hence it was quite natural that Leo XIII should issue the encyclical letter Aeterni Patris in 1879, urging a thorough study of scholastic philosophy, especially of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, as a source of guiding principles for dealing with the social problem. In the encyclical Leo attributes the evils of the age to "erroneous theories respecting our duty to God and our responsibilities as men originally propounded in philosophical schools, which have gradually permeated all ranks of society." To counteract this, Leo proposed to "restore the precious wisdom of St. Thomas and to propagate it as far as possible."<sup>14</sup>

Under the fostering care of Leo XIII the study of scholastic moral philosophy was taken up in earnest. Leo appointed professors at Rome for the special study of

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14. Aubrey, Edwin E. Present Theological Tendencies. p.119.



St. Thomas, and the work was encouraged also in other countries.<sup>15</sup> It came to be known as "Neo-Thomism" or "Neo-Scholasticism." Neo-Thomism purports to cure the diseases of modern society: disunity, lack of direction, shallowness, subjectivism, and anti-intellectualism. Its method is to apply the exploring, eclectic method of Thomas Aquinas to these modern problems. Neo-Thomism operates with the fundamental premise that:

"True civilization is essentially a spiritual order...In Christianity the idea of spiritual order acquires a yet wider and more profound significance. It is based upon the belief in a divine society which transcends all states and cultures and is the final goal of humanity...This society exists in the nature of things as 'the republic of all men under the law of God,' although the actual disorder of human nature prevented its effective realization by man."<sup>16</sup>

The emphasis is upon solidarity and collectivism in society. The aim of Catholic ethics is to secure this collectivism, which must be based on a dynamic inter-relation of human striving and a common devotion to God.

The reader will observe that these philosophical concepts are in perfect harmony with the principles of Immortale Dei and Rerum Novarum. Here again we have the premise that the Catholic Church is the only agency

15. The University of Louvain, Belgium became a leader with a special Institute of Philosophical Studies, headed by a professor who later became Cardinal Mercier. — Confrey, Burton. Catholic Action. p.296.

16. Dawson, Christopher, England's leading Catholic lay philosopher. Quoted in Aubrey. op.cit. p.143.



qualified to solve all of man's problems, both spiritual and secular. Thus Neo-Thomism was admirably fitted to form the intellectual basis of Leo XIII's Social Action and later of its ultimate development, Catholic Action.

## 2. Pope Pius X (1903-1914)

Upon his succession to the "Throne of St. Peter" it became immediately evident that Pius X intended to follow the lines of action that his predecessor had delineated. From Leo XIII he had received the heritage of Immortale Dei and Rerum Novarum. The complete program for the reorganization of society according to the principles of Roman Catholic ethics had been set forth. Pius X took it as his task to help bring that program to fruition. In his first motu proprio,<sup>17</sup> November 22, 1903, Pius X adopted as the motto of his pontificate the words: "Renewing all things in Christ."<sup>18</sup> In the same motu proprio it became evident in what direction Pius planned on directing his energies. He realized that the program of Leo XIII could be made a success only if the laity could be made to cooperate with the clergy in the endeavour. The problem that faced

17. The name given to certain Papal rescripts on account of the clause motu proprio (of his own accord) used in the document. The words signify that the provisions of the rescript were decided on by the Pope personally, that is, not on the advice of cardinals or others, but for reasons he himself deemed sufficient. — Mac Erlean "Motu Proprio" Catholic Encyclopedia. p.602.

18. Husslein. Op.cit. p.19.



Pius X was that of inspiring the laity with a zeal for the work of the Church. Somehow the lay people had to be roused from their lethargy<sup>19</sup> and transformed into eager workers. Pius believed that this could be accomplished by means of a liturgical revival. For roughly fifty years a liturgical movement had been developing among the Benedictines. It had originated in the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes under Abbot Prosper Gueranger.<sup>20</sup> Pius X saw in this liturgical movement a means of inspiring the people for their part in the new program of the Church. In that opening motu proprio he stated: "The true Christian spirit has its first and indispensable source in active participation in the sacred mysteries and the public and solemn prayer of the Church."<sup>21</sup> Then came other decrees outlining a program for drawing the people more closely into the liturgical life of the Church. Pius X formally recommended daily communion when possible, directed that children should be allowed to

19. Cf. p.16: The problem of formalism and indifference.

20. Maynard. Op.cit. p.605.

21. Williams, Michael. Catholic Church in Action. p.300.

Cf. also Ellard, Gerald. Men at Work at Worship. p.32:

"Active participation in the Mass in the sense in which the Holy Father uses the term does not merely signify the outward and external performance of the rites, chant, words, and so on of the Mass. It implies the interior devotion of mind and heart, the sincere inward acknowledgment of God's complete dominion over us and our subjection to Him. Active participation, in short, means a sincere inward acknowledgment of God (the interior sacrifice) expressed by participation in the words, rites, chant, etc. of the external sacrifice. Properly understood therefore, the liturgy is both the internal homage of the soul and its outward bodily expression by means of words, chant, ceremonies, etc. in the forms ordained by the Church for her solemn public worship."



approach the altar upon attaining the age of reason, and facilitated the reception of the Sacrament by the sick. Moreover, Pius X urged daily Bible reading. In 1903 he issued a declaration which struck at certain abuses current in the music of the Roman Church and formulated a plan for the restoration of congregational singing of the Roman plain chant.<sup>22</sup>

It is to be further noted that by the liturgical revival Pius X linked the new program with the age-old doctrine of infused grace.<sup>23</sup> The sacraments which are the channels for this energizing grace are brought to the fore. Furthermore, there is a significant linking with Leo's social encyclicals. Throughout the whole liturgical movement the socializing effects of corporate worship are emphasized.<sup>24</sup> The emphasis upon the sanctification of the individual Catholic as a basis for his activity on behalf of the Church, which is now so prominent a part of Catholic Action teaching, is thus plainly discernible already under Pius X.

Pius X maintained the emphasis that Leo XII had

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22. Attwater. *op.cit.* p.317.

23. The Roman catechism defines "grace" as, "a divine quality inhering in the soul and, as it were, a glory and a light which removes all the stains from the soul and makes the soul itself more beautiful and glorious." II 2,49. Accordingly, grace is not a quality in God, but a quality infused and nowdwellling in the soul, by virtue of which man may do good and obtain the forgiveness of sins. — Engelder, Arndt, et alii. *op.cit.* p.169.

24. Cf. Section on the Theology of Catholic Action.



placed upon the Neo-Scholastic basis of the new program. In his encyclical letter Doctoris Angelici, June, 1914, at the end of his pontificate, Pius X ordered that the study of St. Thomas Aquinas be included in Catholic institutions of learning as the basic philosophical training and as the criterion for use or rejection of all other scholastic teaching.<sup>25</sup>

That Pius X was thinking definitely in terms of the expansion of the Church in spite of opposition is shown by his attitude concerning Catholic newspapers. He is quoted as saying:

" In vain you will build churches, give missions, found schools — all your work, all your efforts, will be destroyed if you are not able to wield the defensive and offensive of a loyal and sincere Catholic press... I would make any sacrifice, even to pawning my ring, pectoral cross and soutane, in order to support a Catholic paper." <sup>26</sup>

It is interesting that under Pius X the term "Catholic Action" was first employed. In 1908 the socialistic tendencies of the Italian Democratic Social League engaged his attention. He dissolved the existing Catholic welfare and social-reform organization of Italy, which was involved in acute internal difficulties. In its place Pius X instituted an Association of Catholic Action.<sup>27</sup> This association of laymen worked for the political, social,

25. Aubrey. op.cit. p.119.

26. Confrey. op.cit. p.200.

27. Attwater. op.cit. p.318.



and economic ideals set forth in Leo XIII's plan of Social Action. Thus we have under Pius X a definite beginning of the implementation of Leo's Social Action by the laity.

### 3. Pope Benedict XV (1914-1921)

Benedict XV is known to history as the "War Pope." He had little time to devote to the development of the Vatican's new plan of Social Action. It must be mentioned, however, that he was active in proposing peace terms to the Allies and to the Central Powers. But his efforts were not crowned with success. It is significant also that he continued to foster the Liturgical Revival. In July, 1915 he urged the organizers of the Liturgical Congress of Montserrat,

"To spread among the faithful an exact knowledge of the liturgy, to instill in their hearts a taste for the sacred formula, rites, and sacraments by which, in union with their Common Mother, they render worship to God, to draw them into active participation in the sacred mysteries and ecclesiastical feasts, which serve to unite the people to the priest, to bring them back to the Church, to nourish piety, strengthen faith, and perfect life."<sup>28</sup>

### 4. Pope Pius XI (1922-1939)

Pope Pius XI is known as the "Pope of Catholic Action." It was under his pontificate that the plans of the previous Popes were completed and the organization of Catholic Action

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<sup>28</sup>. Williams. op.cit. p.300.



definitely crystallized. It is reported that the Italian edition of his encyclicals makes a volume of more than five hundred large and closely printed pages, covering the period from February, 1922 to September, 1929. In all except three months of that period of intense activity Pius XI pronounced publicly upon Catholic Action.<sup>29</sup>

The time of Pius XI's succession to the pontificate coincides with the rise of Fascism in Italy. The totalitarian state towered at the doors of the Vatican. It became necessary to dissolve the Popular Party which was predominantly Catholic.<sup>30</sup> At that time of crisis, in the year 1923, the Pope appointed Cardinal Piccardo to organize the laity of Italy for the purpose of upholding the principles of the Catholic Church in the new social order then being formed. Under the patronage of the Pope new organizations of laymen were formed. These and the older organizations were consolidated under clerical guidance with the general title "Azione Catholica Italiana".<sup>31</sup>

29. Confrey. op.cit. p.40.

30. The Fascisti are reported by Catholic historians to have been extremely anti-clerical. One source of discord was the fact that the Popular Party of Italy, one of the opponents of the Fascisti, was essentially Catholic. During the time of crisis the Pope's picture was burned by Fascists at Catania, in Sicily, while the members of the Catholic Young Men's Association were attacked by Fascists shouting "Viva il Papa Re." Other members of the Catholic Youth organization were attacked in Rome itself. Then came Mussolini's march on Rome. The Popular Party was eventually suppressed. — Teeling, Wm. Pope Pius XI and World Affairs. pp. 110-112.

31. Garrison, W.E. Catholicism and the American Mind. p.194. Lehmann, L.H. "What Really is Catholic Action?" Converted Catholic. (Oct., 1941) p.207.



At the same time there came forth from the Pope a stream of letters and declarations which accurately and definitely outlined the final form of Catholic Action. It was definitely established that Catholic Action was not to be limited to Italy, but was to be a world-wide program. The first encyclical of Pius XI was Ubi Arcano (Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ) December 23, 1922. In this document the Pope speaks of "Catholic Action so dear to us."<sup>32</sup> Moreover he states that the apostolate of the laity will "bring about the rebirth of the individual, the family, society, and the whole world."<sup>33</sup> Many Catholic writers mark this declaration of Ubi Arcano as the birth of Catholic Action.<sup>34</sup> But, as we have shown, both the roots of the program and the name itself are older.

The formal definition of Catholic Action is found in that most important letter of Pius XI to Cardinal Bertram, Archbishop of Breslau, November, 1928. The important parts of the letter are herewith given:

1. A definition of Catholic Action:

"The part taken by the Catholic laity in the apostolic mission of the Church with the object of defending the principles of faith and morals and of spreading a sane and beneficial social action and to restore Catholic life in the home and society. This is to be done under the guidance of the Hierarchy of the Church, outside and above all party politics...

32. Husslein. op.cit. p.22.

33. Confrey. op.cit. p.305.

34. Kildany, Herbert. "The Meaning of Catholic Action." Catholic World. CXL (October, 1934) p.104.



If by the necessary connection of matters, organized Catholic Action must go down to the economic and social field, touching even political interests, it does so only because of supernatural interests and the moral and religious welfare of individuals and peoples."<sup>35</sup>

2. An emphasis upon help from the laity:

"When the attacks upon sound faith and morals increase in severity day by day, and when the clergy, apparently by reason of their small number are unable to satisfy the need of souls, more reliance must be placed upon Catholic Action for the help which will fill in the gaps in the ranks of the clergy with lay assistants."<sup>36</sup>

3. A statement of its scope:

"Catholic Action does not consist only in the pursuit of one's own perfection, even though that comes first and foremost, but in a true apostolate in which Catholics of every social class participate. This they do by focusing their thoughts and their endeavors on those centers of sound doctrine and manifold social activities which, when legitimately organized, enjoy the aid and support of episcopal authority."

"It embraces societies and works of every kind especially of a religious nature, whether they be for the promotion of piety, the formation of the young, or for a strictly social or economic goal."<sup>37</sup>

Another important letter is that written by Pius XI to Cardinal Sagura, of Toledo, Spain, on November 6, 1929. There Pius states: "Catholic Action is nothing else than the apostolate of the faithful under the leadership of bishops."<sup>38</sup> This is an important reiteration of the

35. Kildany. op.cit. p.105.

Confrey. op.cit. p. 40.

Husslein. op.cit. p.235.

36. Husslein. op.cit. p.235.

37. Ibid. pp.235,236.

38. Confrey. op.cit. p.69.



statement made earlier by the pontiff that Catholic Action must be under the direction of the hierarchy. Unless the work of the laity is definitely under the bishops, it is not considered to be Catholic Action. Thus the supervision of the hierarchy is to be regarded as an indispensable requisite.

The vast scope of Catholic Action is vividly expressed in a letter of Pius XI to the Patriarch of Lisbon, Spain, in 1934. There he says of the program of Catholic Action that "no activity which is possible and useful to Christian life must be excluded from its program."<sup>39</sup>

There are two encyclicals of Pius XI that deal exclusively with Catholic Action. The first of these is the encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno (Concerning the Apostolate of the Laity), June 29, 1931. It is necessary to consider the situation out of which this encyclical grew, for it is essentially an apologetic for Catholic Action. It was in the year 1930 that the Vatican experienced considerable difficulty with the Fascist government of Mussolini. The dispute was centered about the question of the education of the youth. The Church was determined to keep the youth of Italy Catholic, while the government was determined that the State should control the family. At least this is the picture painted by Catholic authors.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the Italian government claimed that the youth organizations of Catholic Action were being used for political, rather than ecclesiastical, purposes.

39. Husslein. op.cit. p.236.

40. Teeling. op.cit. p.134.



Official Fascist papers made the accusation that no government of the world would have permitted the continuance of the situation created in Italy by the existence of Italian Catholic Action.<sup>41</sup> The truth probably lies somewhere between the two claims. The desire of the Fascist government to control the youth is well known. On the other hand, it seems certain that the Catholic Action societies of Italy were actually exerting their influence in Italian politics. At any rate, the situation in Italy became critical in 1931. The government closed the Catholic Clubs in Rome and many of them in the provinces. Acts of aggression were committed by the Black Shirts against church property. Pius speaks in the encyclical of "brutal acts, striking of blows, drawing of blood, insults in the press" — all directed against the Catholics.<sup>42</sup> In June of the same year the Pope issued the encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno against the Italian government. It is noteworthy that this document was not published in Italy, but was flown out of Italy and published in France. This was done to escape the censorship of the Fascist government. In the following September an agreement was reached between the Vatican and Mussolini. Its stipulations are interesting. It was agreed:

- " 1. Catholic Action was not to mix itself in politics, and it should not adopt the Italian flag.
2. Catholic Action was not to organize any association of a trade union nature,

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41. Pius XI, "Non Abbiamo Bisogno," Selected Papal Encyclicals, p. 23.

42. Ibid. p.9.



but should cooperate with the existing Fascist syndicates.

3. No person was to be appointed to an office in Catholic Action who belonged to a party adverse to Fascism.

4. The Youth's Club of the Catholic Action were to change their name and character. They were to confine themselves to religion and were not to have anything to do with physical education or general education." 43

The agreement of 1931 ended the friction between Mussolini and the Catholic Church. However, it is important for an understanding of Catholic Action that we examine some of the statements of Non Abbiamo Bisogno.

Pius XI held:

1. "It ( i.e. Catholic Action ) does not wish to be nor can be anything other than 'the participation and the collaboration of the laity with the Apostolic Hierarchy.' " 44
2. "We have repeatedly and solemnly affirmed and protested that Catholic Action, both from its very nature and by our precise and categorical directions and orders is outside and above all party politics." 45
3. "It was Jesus Christ Himself who laid the first foundations of Catholic Action, by choosing and educating the Apostles and disciples as fellow workers in His divine Apostolate. And His example was at once followed by the first Holy Apostles as the sacred text itself proves." 46
4. "He is Catholic only in name and by Baptism who adopts and develops a programme with doctrines and maxims so opposed to the rights of the Church of Christ and of souls, and who also misrepresents, combats, and persecutes Catholic Action, which, as is universally known, the Church and its Head regard as very dear and precious." 47

43. Teeling, op.cit. p.135.

44. Pius XI, Non Abbiamo Bisogno, p.6.

45. Ibid. p15.

46. Ibid. p.29.

47. Ibid. p.33.



Important deductions may be drawn from this encyclical. First, it is very evident that the Papacy regards the work of Catholic Action as being so important that it will risk all to defend it. It is considered an integral part of the Church's work. Secondly, Catholic Action as an organization, both in Italy and in other countries, is forbidden by Papal decree from becoming a political party or acting as such. However, one should not make the mistake of believing that Catholic Action workers have no interest in politics. They are to exert their influence in politics as individuals. This is established by a section from a letter of Pius XI to a Catholic society in Belgium. Pius writes:

"The Christian once trained must spend outside of himself the life that he has received. He ought to carry everywhere this treasure of Christianity, and make it live in every field of life, in the family, and in public life, not excluding politics. For what we wish is that Christ rule on earth as He rules in heaven and that His Kingdom over the world become effective." 48

On March 28, 1937, toward the end of his pontificate, Pius XI issued the encyclical Firmissimam Constantiam (Catholic Action Plan for Mexico). It has been called "a picture of Catholic Action ideally organized," 49 Three points of the encyclical are of especial interest:

1. Pius emphasizes the importance of the help of the laity as rendered in Catholic Action.

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48. Ross, E.J., Fundamental Sociology, p.611.

49. Husslein, op.cit. p.374.



"It would be very difficult to reconquer for Christ so many misguided souls without the providential assistance which the laity gives by means of Catholic Action." 50

2. The laity are to extend the influence of the Catholic Church into all fields of human activity.

"This does not mean that works, commonly called social service, lie outside the scope of Catholic Action. Because these works aim at the practical application of the principles of justice and charity and are a means of winning the multitudes, since souls often are reached only by the relief of corporal suffering and economic need, We ourselves and Our predecessor, Leo XIII, of blessed memory, have recommended them frequently." 51

3. The laity engaged in the work of Catholic Action must act under the guidance of the hierarchy:

"It will be for you, Venerable Brethren (i.e. Bishops), placed by the Holy Spirit to rule the Church of God, to give the final decision in these cases, to which the faithful will render obedience and fidelity according to your instructions. And this is extremely faithful to your heart, because the right intention and obedience are always and everywhere the indispensable conditions to draw down the divine blessings upon the pastoral ministry and Catholic Action." 52

We shall return to the definitions of Pius XI at the end of this section where all the Papal declarations will be synthesized and the composite picture of Catholic Action reviewed. Now, however, we turn to Pius XI's declarations on social and economic questions. Pius XI continued the work where Leo XIII left off. On May 15, 1931 he issued the

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50. Ibid. p. 378.

51. Ibid. p. 380.

52. Ibid. p. 387.



now famous encyclical Quadragesimo Anno (Reconstructing the Social Order) in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of Leo's Rerum Novarum.

Quadragesimo Anno opens with a tribute to Rerum Novarum, its social, economic, and religious philosophy, together with the effects it produced. Pius XI holds that it caused many priests and Catholic laymen to apply themselves to the advance of social and economic science. Moreover, he contends, it caused the faithful to apply themselves to the formation of Catholic trade unions. Where such unions could not be founded, Catholic workingmen were urged to join non-denominational unions. He ends his tribute by referring to Rerum Novarum as "the Magna Charta on which all Christian activities in social matters are ultimately based."<sup>53</sup>

Following the tribute to Rerum Novarum, Pius XI enunciates the underlying principle of Quadragesimo Anno. The Church is said to be responsible for the moral conduct of man, not only in the divine-human relationship, but in all social relations as well. Therefore, the Church must determine the standards for man's behavior in social and economic affairs. This, said Pius, was done by Leo XIII in Rerum Novarum when he wrote concerning the right to own property, the obligations of ownership, the unjust claims of both capital and labor. However, the world at large had not accepted the Church's leadership and hence still was

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53. Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno", Five Great Encyclicals, p.135.



confronted by social and economic discord. Following the philosophical concepts of Neo-Thomism, Pius XI holds that these evils are the result of excessive individualism in modern society, which in turn is a result of society having lost its organic form (i.e. having left the Catholic faith.). The Pope assails free competition as a symptom of this harmful, individualistic spirit. He stresses the need of an integrating principle. That principle, says Pius XI as did Leo XIII before him, is moral justice as found in the ethics of Catholicism.

Also highly important in the text of Quadragesimo Anno is Pius XI's appeal to the laity engaged in Catholic Action. He calls upon all those who are in the position of workingman or employee to strive to spread the principles of the Roman religion to the end that they may be accepted by society as a whole. Pius XI is careful to stress again that in this field of economics, as well as in politics, the members of Catholic Action are to work, not as an organization, but as individuals, as a leaven within the lump of the non-Catholics. He states:

"We believe, moreover, as a necessary consequence, that the end intended will be more certainly attained the greater the contribution furnished by men of technical, commercial and more still, by Catholic principles and their application. We look for this contribution, not to Catholic Action ( i.e. as an organization acting as such) which has no intention of displaying any strictly syndical or political activities, but to our sons, whom Catholic Action imbues with these



principles, and trains for the Apostolate under the guidance and direction of the Church." 54

The question of Socialism next comes under consideration. Both Socialism and Communism, which Pius XI terms a new form of Socialism, are condemned because of their opposition to religion. However, most significantly Pius points out that many of the tenets of Socialism's economic theory are quite compatible with the Catholic economic theory. The Pope declares:

"It may well come about that gradually the tenets of mitigated Socialism will no longer be different from the program of those who seek to reform human society according to Christian principles. For it is rightly contended that certain forms of property must be reserved for the State, since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large. Just demands and desires of this kind contain nothing opposed to Christian truth, nor are they in any sense peculiar to Socialism." 55

Pius XI concludes the encyclical with the thought that, "Economic life must be inspired by Christian principles." 56 He appeals to the laity to continue as the sons of Catholic Action to aid the Church in the solution of social problems. Thus we find in this encyclical of Pius XI the great Social Action program of Leo XIII definitely implemented by the laity of the Catholic Church.

Pius XI issued a number of other encyclicals on social

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54. Ibid. p.151.

55. Ibid. p.156.

56. Ibid. p. 163.



Problems. On December 31, 1929, he issued the encyclical letter Rappresentanti in Terra ( Christian Education of the Youth). In this document he condemned secular education and in its place put a program of religious education presenting Christ as the source of all natural knowledge. Important for our present discussion is the fact that Pius XI includes the education of the youth among the functions of the Catholic Action program. He states:

"Whatever Catholics do in promoting and defending the Catholic school for their children, is a genuinely religious work and therefore an important task of 'Catholic Action.' For this reason the associations which in various countries are so zealously engaged in this work of prime necessity, are especially dear to Our paternal heart and are deserving of commendation." 57

Exactly one year later, December 31, 1930, Pius XI issued the encyclical Casti Connubii ( Christian Marriage ). This is essentially a reaffirmation of the Catholic principles of marriage. 58 The home is placed on the basis of being

57. Pius XI, "Christian Education of the Youth," Five Great Encyclicals, p.61.

58. Marriage is given the rank of a sacrament and is held to be an honorable estate. The Rev. John A. O'Brien writes in his pamphlet Catholic Marriage, page 6: The hunger for the love and companionship of a helpmate who will lessen the sorrows of life and increase its joys, has been planted in the heart of mankind by God Himself. Instead of ignoring such a craving or making light of it, as is so often done, it should be recognized as the reflection of a divine plan. The necessity of making adequate provision for the satisfaction of such an innate and universal longing should be faced honestly and squarely."

The same writer refers to the encyclical of Pius XI on marriage, writing: "Catholic Action, stressed so frequently by the Holy Father, means essentially that our laity must abandon their purely passive role wherein they are merely the recipients of priestly ministrations, and assume an active



a model of the union between Christ and the Church. But this encyclical is important inasmuch as it endeavors to make Catholic Action the agency to reemphasize the ideal of Roman Catholic marriage over against the mixed marriages currently harassing the Church. We shall see later how important this aspect of Catholic Action has become.

Leaving the great social encyclicals of Pius XI, we come to his declarations on the liturgy. Like his predecessors Pius X and Benedict XV, Pius XI wished to fill the laity with religious knowledge and fervor to the end that they might become the more inspired to carry on the work of Catholic Action in society. Hence he moved to bring the laity into more active participation in the worship life of the Church. On November 22, 1928, Pius declared:

"In order that the faithful may more

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(Continued from page 49) part in the application of the Christian evangel to the social, political, and industrial life of the world today. There are few, if any, fields where the achievement of the Church's ideal is so directly dependent upon lay cooperation as in that of marriage. The Church's ideal is a Catholic marriage, a union where both the husband and the wife are members of the same holy faith, founded by Christ and propagated by the Apostles and their successors to the present day. In such unions the faith is most likely to be strengthened and handed down intact to the children." — Ibid. pp.3-4.

However, Rome still holds that the monastic life is above the married state. In the pamphlet Shall I Be a Nun? Daniel A. Lord writes: "We need good women in the world. But we need them even more in the convent. For if we have not good women in the convent to train our girls, to lift up the fallen, to convert pagan women, to hold up the example of stainless womanhood and purity, we are not so likely to have good women in the world." op.cit.p.32.



actively participate in divine worship, let them be made once more to sing the Gregorian Chant, so far as it belongs to them to take part in it. It is most important that when the faithful assist at the sacred ceremonies, or when sodalities take part with the clergy in processions, that they should not be merely detached and silent spectators, but filled with a deep sense of the beauty of the liturgy, they should sing alternately with the clergy and the choir as it is prescribed." 58

In the encyclical Christ the King, December 25, 1926, Pius XI again emphasized the liturgy, acclaiming its teaching and educative power and ordering that the people be better instructed in it so as to better appreciate its value.<sup>59</sup>

Another important declaration of Pius XI was uttered on December 12, 1936 when he stated, "The liturgy is the most important organ of the ordinary magisterium of the Church."<sup>60</sup>

Several miscellaneous encyclicals of Pius XI ought to be noted because of their connection with Catholic Action. The "Retreat Movement", which will be discussed in a later section, was given considerable impetus by the encyclical Mens Nostra ( Value of the Retreat Movement) issued on December 20, 1929. There Pius XI advocated the quiet seclusion of retreats for priests and for the religious. Then he adds significantly:

"With no less care, Venerable Brethren, would We have the manifold cohorts of Catholic Action (i.e. the laity) fitly prepared or trained by the spiritual exercises (i.e. of retreats)." 61

58. Fitzsimons and McGuire, Restoring All Things, p.22.

59. Ibid. p. 44.

60. Ibid. p. 44.

61. Russlein, op.cit. p.81.



Also significant is the apostolic letter Deus Scientiarum Dominus. This letter deals with the training of seminary students. It resulted in a complete reorganization of the program of studies for the religious and diocesan clergies. This reorganization brought the courses and degrees into line with the practice of the most modern universities.<sup>62</sup> Thus we find the clergy of the Roman Church being better prepared to aid the laity in the fight of Catholic Action in society.

Finally, it should be noted that Pius XI encouraged the Thomistic revival, which, as it will be recalled, furnishes the philosophic background for the Catholic Action movement. In 1923 the tercentenary of the canonization of Thomas Aquinas was celebrated. Upon that occasion Pius XI issued the encyclical Studiorum Ducem, confirming the primacy of the Thomistic philosophy for Christian theology.<sup>63</sup>

##### 5. Pope Pius XII (1939-19--)

When Pope Pius XII succeeded to the "Supreme Pontificate," he found the work of pronouncing the principles of Catholic Action largely completed. The definitions were perfected under Pius XI. Hence it is the duty of the present Pope to put into execution the plans for Catholic Action. It is not too early in his career as Pope to judge that he, too, is an ardent advocate of Catholic Action. In his

62. America, (February 18, 1939), p.460.

63. Aubrey, op.cit. p.119.



inaugural encyclical Summi Pontificatus, October 20, 1939, Pius XII congratulated the Apostles of Catholic Action ( the laity active in Catholic Action) who have become to the Roman Church a "rich source of grace and strength."<sup>64</sup> He goes on to point out that since "priests are scarce in comparison with the calls made upon them," the army of Catholic laymen active in Catholic Action must be increased. He then adds that in such a program "the life of the family has a special part to play."<sup>65</sup> Pius XII describes the family as the most important school in which the young are trained to know God, to love and serve Him. He refers to the home as the ultimate center of resistance to the new attempts to dethrone Christ. "In countries where churches are closed, where the crucifix is removed from schools and colleges, the family circle remains as the one impregnable citadel of Christian culture."<sup>66</sup> Less than a month after this first encyclical, on November 11, 1939, on the occasion of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the first diocese in the United States at Baltimore, Pius XII issued a special encyclical to the American Bishops. This document shows how exactly Pius XII is in accord with the entire policy of his predecessors in regard to Catholic Action. He commends the laity of the Catholic Church in America for their part in Catholic Action. He tells them to better prepare themselves for the work of the lay apostolate in society, urging: "The laity, too, who are active in

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64. Hughes, P., The Pope's New Order, p. 47.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.



Catholic Action should attain Christian education and culture suitable to their office of being in a true sense co-workers with the clergy."<sup>67</sup> Moreover he views the social and economic problem in the same light as do the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. "Following paths so marvelously marked out by Rerum Novarum of Leo XIII and Quadragesimo Anno of Pius XI, let us all unite in their effort to find at long last a most practical solution to this difficult and knotty problem... For this purpose very frankly the Holy Father invites those separated from the Church to return to the See of Peter."<sup>68</sup>

Pius XII has, furthermore, shown himself to be very aggressive in asserting the claims of the Vatican to dictate to the world with a voice of authority. On June 2, 1939, in a radio address commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum, the Pope proclaimed "the indisputable competence of the Church to decide where the social order needs to enter into contact with the moral order."<sup>69</sup> He then proclaimed the Roman Catholic version of the "New Order" that is to be instituted at the end of the war. In this we have the same familiar social and economic teaching of the Vatican. A new note is added, however, in an admonition that the rights of the individual are to be preserved from too extensive control by the government over man's "physical, spiritual, religious, and

67. Official summary, quoted in St. Louis Post Dispatch, (November 12, 1939).

68. Ibid.

69. St. Louis Post Dispatch, June 3, 1939.



moral movements."<sup>70</sup>

It ought to be noted also that the Papacy has asserted and reasserted its "Peace Points" for the end of the war.<sup>71</sup> Whether these efforts will be crowned by success or not, the fact remains that they represent a significant part of Catholic Action, namely, the drive to win world-wide acceptance for Catholic ethics. This is clearly shown by the statement of Pius XII that accompanied the presentation of his "Peace Points." He writes:

"May Our benediction descend...upon those who, though not members of the visible body of the Catholic Church, are near to us in their faith in God and in Jesus Christ, and share with us our views in regard to the provisions for peace and its fundamental aims." <sup>72</sup>

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70. Ibid.

71. The "Peace Points" of Pius XII are the following:

1. Right of all States, large or small, to freedom, independence.
2. Right of national minorities to cultural and linguistic expression, means of livelihood, and reproduction.
3. Right of all nations to access to economic resources and raw materials.
4. Abolition of total war by means of sincere, honest, and progressive limitation of armaments.
5. Creation of institutions to guarantee the observance of treaties and promote necessary corrections and revisions of such treaties.
6. Barring persecution and oppression of religion and the Church.

— Living Church, January 7, 1942,  
p.3.

72. Ibid.



6. A Synthesis of the Papal Declarations Forming a Comprehensive Definition of Catholic Action.

On the basis of the official declarations of the Vatican we may define Catholic Action as: The new program of the Roman Catholic Church which is designed to meet the current problems of the Church by enlisting the help of the laity who, having risen to new heights in their personal religious knowledge and fervor, are to work under the direction of the hierarchy, either as religious organizations or as individuals in society, for the spread of the Catholic faith and the widening of the Catholic sphere of influence in civil, social, and economic affairs.

In forming such a comprehensive definition it should be noted that there are two schools of thought in this country in regard to the scope of Catholic Action's proper activities. One party strives to limit Catholic Action to functions in which the laity works with the priests and bishops for objectives that are purely religious.

Thus Ross in his Fundamental Sociology states:

"Organized Catholic groups whose main purpose is social, cultural, or political, are not part of Catholic Action, for the main purpose of a Catholic activity approved as Catholic Action by the Bishop must be, of its nature, mainly spiritual and supernatural in character."<sup>73</sup>

Fitzsimons and McGuire hold a similar view, writing that:

"An association formed to defend the

<sup>73</sup> Ross, op.cit. p.610.



liberty of Catholics in civic matters is obviously not as intimately a part of Catholic Action as a group of employees or of workers who take it upon themselves to sanctify their milieu and to be the nucleus of a 'state of grace' in their work." 74

The other school of thought believes that the proper activities of Catholic Action cover a wider field. Members of this school of thought hold that political or economic activity which works for the advancement of Catholicism is just as religious an activity and just as surely a part of Catholic Action as is the winning of converts. They believe that all these activities work for the same ultimate goal, namely, the triumph of Roman Catholicism as a universal religion. Hence, they are all to be classed as religious activities. Catholic Action, official magazine of the movement in the United States, has this to say:

"Catholic Action's field of work is as wide as life. Nothing human is alien to it. It cooperates in the religious life, in the promotion of Christian culture, in the Christianization of the family, in the defense of the rights of the Church, in the help of schools, in the apostolate of the Press, in the cleansing of public morality, in making civil life Christian, in the solution of the economic problem in society, in fact in everything." 75

It is apparent from a study of the literature of Catholic Action in the United States that this latter view is the prevailing one and the concept operative in the direction of the movement here. Moreover, it is in full harmony with the declarations of Pope Pius XI. 76

74. op.cit. p.15.

75. Catholic Action, XV ( October, 1933 ), p.25-26.

76. Cf. Letter to Cardinal Bertram, p.40.



Coming now to a more detailed discussion of the definition of Catholic Action, we note first that the movement involves a utilization of the laity on a scale hitherto unprecedented in the history of the Catholic Church. While the old sacerdotal system is preserved with all its totalitarian authority, there is an effort to give the layman a part in the work of the Church. He is reminded again and again of the "royal priesthood" and of the office of the "lay apostolate."<sup>77</sup> Mighty efforts are being made to cause the layman to appreciate the worship life of the Church and to inject a living Catholicism into the home. Members of the laity are being told repeatedly that they are co-workers with the priests and that the Great Father is depending on them to carry the message of Catholicism into all the world.

The hierarchy is acutely conscious that this practice is definitely an innovation. Hence they hasten to say over and over that Catholic Action is but a new name for an old, old activity. The Rev. Bernard J. Shiel, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, in his Catechism of Student Catholic Action states:

"The first and most glorious example of lay promotion of the work of Christ was given by the Mother of God in her dealings with her Divine Son and with the Apostles. We have further examples in the disciples, the Samaritan women, and those numerous laymen and laywomen

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77. Cf. in section on Theology of Catholic Action.



to whom Paul refers in his Epistles as 'helpers in the Kingdom of God,' 'my fellow laborers' and 'my helpers in Christ Jesus.'<sup>78</sup>

What the Bishops neglect to mention, however, is that the potentialities of lay participation in church work have been neglected for centuries in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>79</sup> There is no doubt that Christ and the Apostles used laymen and laywomen to promote the Kingdom. But history fails to produce any example of the Roman Church having previously followed the New Testament example. It was not until the Lutheran Reformation that the laity was restored to its rightful position in the Church. The Lutheran principle of the universal priesthood implies that each Christian is an active participant in the whole life of the Church.<sup>80</sup>

78. Williams, op.cit. 338.

79. Herbert Kildany, writing in Catholic World, CXL ( 1934 ), p. 104, states definitely: "It will be as well to point out that despite the constant assurance that there is nothing novel about this cooperation of lay folk, there is throughout a note of urgency. The movement arises from the needs of the day, and is intended to take the fullest advantage of conditions hitherto unknown or unexplored."

80. Cf. Luther's statement: "So wir Christen worden sind durch diesen Priester und sein Priesteramt" (nämlich durch Christum), "und in der Taufe durch den Glauben in ihm eingeleibt, so kriegen wir auch das Recht und Macht, das Wort, so wir von ihm haben, zu lehren und zu bekennen vor jedermann, ein jeglicher nach seinem Beruf und Stande. Denn ob wir wohl nicht alle im öffentlichen Amt und Beruf sind, so soll und mag doch ein jeglicher Christ seinen Nächsten lehren, unterrichten, vermahnen, trösten, strafen durch Gottes Wort, wann und wo jemand das bedarf; als Vater und Mutter, ihre Kinder und Gesinde, ein Bruder, Nachbar, Bürger oder Bauer den andern. Denn es kann ja ein Christ der zehn Gebote, des Glaubens, Gebets, usw. den andern, so noch unverständlich oder schwach ist, unterrichten oder vermahnen, und der es hört, schuldig ist, solches auch als Gottes Wort von ihm anzunehmen und mit öffentlich zu bekennen... Wir bestehen fest auf dem, dass kein ander Wort Gottes ist denn das allein, das allen Christen zu verkündigen geboten ist; dass nicht eine andere Taufe ist denn die, die alle Christen geben mögen; dass kein ander Gedächtnis ist des Abendessens



The prerogatives of the priesthood are given to all Christians. There is no distinction such as is made in Roman Catholic sacerdotalism where the clergy is not only elevated above the laity but actually made the intercessors, mediators, between God and the laity. Roman theologians point out that not the hearing church ( the laity), but the teaching church, ( the governing clergy and the bishops ) is mother and preceptress of all churches.<sup>81</sup> Even under Catholic Action this principle is not changed. The layman may be a priest, but he is not the priest. The latter prerogative is reserved for the members of the clergy alone. Moreover, the Catholic layman works under and by the authority of the hierarchy. He is still in a position subordinate to the clergy.

Indeed all experts on Catholic Action agree on this that the Holy See has made it obligatory that all functions of the laity must be carried out under the supervision of the hierarchy and the priests. All authors on Catholic Action stress this. Ross asserts: "Unless he ( i.e. the layman ) works under the direct authority and approbation of his bishop, the organization, however laudable, is not a part of Catholic Action."<sup>82</sup> Confrey holds: "We must participate under the

(Continued from page 59) des Herren denn das, so ein jeder Christ begeben mag; auch keine andere Sünde ist; denn die ein jeder Christ binden und auflösen mag; item, dass kein Opfer sei denn der Leib eines jeden Christenmenschen; dass auch niemand beten kann oder möge denn allein der Christ; dazu dass niemand urteilen soll über die Lehre denn allein der Christ. Dieses sind aber je die priesterlichen und königlichen Aemter." — Gesammelte Werke, St. Louis ed., X, p. 1598 ff., Quoted in Pieper, F., Christliche Dogmatik, III, pp. 504-505.

81. Engelder et alii, op.cit. p. 162.

82. Ross, op.cit. p. 610.



direction of the hierarchy. Without that leadership, nothing we do could be interpreted as Catholic Action."<sup>83</sup> Fitzsimons and McGuire state: "They ( the priests ) must have their part in this holy work, because Catholic Action, although of its nature a work for the laity, can neither begin nor produce its proper fruits without the assiduous and diligent activity of the priests."<sup>84</sup> Later these same authors say: " The Christian Apostolate ( i.e. the work of the laity in Catholic Action ) is, like Christian worship, the priesthood of Christ working through the hierarchy. In the same way that the laity can only take part in the official prayers of the Church when they participate in the liturgical worship of the hierarchy, they only take part in the Catholic Action of the Church when they participate in the apostolate of the hierarchy. This they must do if they want to share in an authentic manner in the religious and conquering activity of Christ, the Priest Apostle, whose ministers we are."<sup>85</sup> Thus we see clearly that the old sacerdotal system of the Roman Catholic Church is carefully safeguarded under the new program. An act of the layman is acceptable and blessed only if it is performed by the authority delegated him by the bishop. It is evident that the Roman Church is not changing its doctrine; the authority of the Church is still said to rest with the hierarchy and not with the people.

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83. op.cit. p.69.

84. op.cit. p.ix.

85. Ibid. p. 23.



In considering the remainder of the definition of Catholic Action, namely, that which concerns itself with the scope of the activities of the new program, we will do well to follow the division suggested by Msgr. Fulton Scheen. Msgr. Scheen divides Catholic Action into two kinds of action: The first he calls "Immanent Action." It remains within the subject, the layman, to perfect him in the spiritual life of the Church. The second Scheen calls "Transitive Action." It passes out of the subject, the layman, into society to perfect something that is external to itself.<sup>86</sup> Both Immanent and Transitive Action are discussed fully in the latter part of the thesis. Hence, our treatment here will be in the nature of an overview.

Immanent Action is a synonym for personal piety. The teaching of the Church is that one who is to be a member of the lay apostolate must first of all sanctify himself for his sacred task. He must receive divine grace to carry on the work of Catholic Action among non-Catholics. Hence the primary emphasis in Catholic Action is upon making better Catholics out of the laity. Confrey says in the introduction of his work:

"We must through the aid of the sacraments, the liturgy, cooperation with grace, and prayer build supernatural and Christian virtue solidly on the natural. We must labor unceasingly at the life work of becoming saints, of enjoying the next life eternally with our Creator and the Church triumphant. Only in that way can we claim our heritage and, having brought

<sup>86</sup>. Scheen, Fulton, Mystical Body of Christ, p.394.



Christian principles into domination in our own lives, spread their control into all the ramifications of life about us. Such procedure is Catholic Action." 87

The concept that lies behind this principle of personal sanctification before personal evangelism is that of the Mystical Body, which is the Church of Christ. Catholic authors repeatedly state: "The Catholic Apostolate and Catholic worship are two essential manifestations of the same divine life which Jesus Christ lives on earth in His Mystical Body."<sup>88</sup> The Christian is said to become a member of this Mystical Body through Baptism. The rest of the worship life of the Church, particularly the liturgy and the Mass in the liturgy, give the individual Christian the power to function as a member of this body. For "the Apostolic action of the visible Hierarchy and of the whole hierarchized Catholic Action supposes an intense supernatural spirit. The militants of Catholic Action will acquire this spirit from its foremost and indispensable fount, which is, according to Pius X and Pius XI, liturgical worship."<sup>89</sup> The corporate nature of the liturgy is also stressed in connection with the emphasis upon the Mystical Body. This is said to have a socializing effect upon the body of Catholic laymen, causing them to regard each other as equals and to long to bring non-Catholics into the fold of the Church.

The efforts to achieve personal piety are not limited

87. op.cit. vii.

88. Fitzsimons and McGuire, op.cit. p.49.

89. Ibid. p.32.



to church services alone. The home is hailed as a valuable training school for the youth who someday will carry the banners of Catholic Action. The Catholic school is stressed again and again as the agency which takes up where the home leaves off. Retreats are being used more and more. They are places where, during vacation months, both the clergy and the laity may go to rest, meditate, and study the tenets of Catholicism. Study Clubs are formed in the parishes, that the laity may learn the doctrine of their Church and study the social, economic, and civil encyclicals of the Popes. Sodalties are formed, giving laymen and laywomen of like mind the opportunity of working together for a common religious objective. All of these and other agencies are means of effecting Immanent Action. They will be discussed later in the thesis when the organization of Catholic Action in our country is studied.

Transitive Action results from the apostolic zeal of the laity.<sup>90</sup> It is the very end and aim of the whole program

90.Cf. "Catholic Action Prayer" in J.F. Stedman's My Sunday Missal, p.352: "O Lord Jesus, Who hast said, 'by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love, one for another.' Grant us, we beseech Thee, an active share in thine own zeal for souls. If I had not been redeemed by Thee, where would I be at this moment? What bewildering questions and doubts would not be afflicting my soul if Thou hadst not given me the light of faith? Save me, O Jesus, from blinding indifference, praying and acting merely for my own needs, while, at my door, amongst my own acquaintances, there are so many starved hearts in need of Thy Truth; so many famished minds in need of Thy love. Have mercy on me, Jesus, and grant me the grace to rise from my slumber, and fix deep in my soul such a personal love for Thee that I may act always and everywhere for the salvation of other souls, especially in those works recommended by our Holy Father, our Bishops, and Pastors. Amen."



of Catholic Action. The laity are to carry with them into society their Catholic teachings. They are to strive to sanctify their environment. Organizations are often founded for the purpose of achieving some certain objective. But the individual is of equal importance in the scheme. He tries to win converts himself. He enlists the aid of the priest where he himself is not successful. Where it is not possible to win converts to the Church, the individual is to strive to gain acceptance for at least the ethics of the Roman Church. The Catholic doctor in his professional practice strives to introduce Catholic ideals of marriage and birth control. The Catholic laborer strives to gain acceptance for the Pope's program among his associates in the union. The Catholic in politics labors to advance the prestige of the Catholic Church in that field. The Catholic in journalism sees to it, whenever possible that the Roman Church receives the proper kind of propaganda. Everywhere, in every field, the members of the lay apostolate work to advance the cause of their faith. Everywhere Catholics are striving to be the leaven in the lump of society.<sup>91</sup> When it is considered that

91. Cf. the statement of Msgr. Fulton Scheen, op.cit.p.402:

"Too often we think of Catholic Action as zealous laymen going into foreign fields to evangelize them. For example, doctors labouring to purify the stage, lawyers working to spiritualize the trade unions. Catholic Action does not mean this in ideal. It means....that different groups and classes will be Catholicized by and through the Catholics in those groups. That is, that the stage will be cleansed by and through Catholicism on the stage, that the medical profession will be made moral by and through Catholic doctors, that law will be made honest by and through Catholic lawyers, that the working classes will be saved from Communism for the Communion of Saints by and through Catholic workers themselves. The



in 1943 there were reported to be in the United States 16,858,210 Roman Catholics thirteen years of age and older, it can readily be seen that the program of Catholic Action affords tremendous possibilities for the Roman Church.<sup>92</sup>

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(Continued from page 65) bishop labors in his diocese, the priest in his parish, and the layman in his trade; and if every Catholic played his role well in his particular profession, the world would soon be a better place in which to live."

92. Landis, B.Y. Year Book of American Churches 1943, p.82.



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