

Duties of the faithful Christian



HE SACRED HEART OF JESUS promised St. Margaret Mary that He would give those consecrated to Him *all the graces necessary in their state of life*. At Lourdes and Fatima, we have been commanded to do *Penance! Penance! Penance!* To clarify this repeated threefold request, His Majesty later came to Sr. Lucia, saying: "*the sacrifice required for every person is the fulfillment of his duties in life and the observance of My law. This is the penance that I now seek and require.*" Many fail to complete this penance because they do not know their duties. Here, then, is a summary of the duties of a Christian toward God's Holy Church as well as the secular society using primarily the writings of St. Peter Julian Eymard.



EVER CHRISTIAN has to fulfill towards the Church the four duties of the Fourth Commandment of God. As spiritual fatherhood is greater than physical fatherhood, so our duties towards the Church must enjoy primacy of honor and of fidelity.

Now, the Fourth Commandment directs us to *honor* our parents, to *love* them, to *obey* them, and to *assist* them in their needs: such are the duties of Christians towards the Pope, the bishops, and the priests, each according to the order of his dignity and of his mission in the Church.

Honor. – We must honor the Pope as the visible Vicar of Jesus Christ. He is the Teacher of teachers, the Father of fathers, the Master of masters; that is why he wears the tiara, the triple crown of Jesus Christ. To the Sovereign Pontiff, therefore, we owe sovereign honor and supreme respect; the Pope is to us in all our conduct what the Blessed Sacrament is to us in all our adoration. With the pope stands or falls Christianity. We are either papal or we are nothing.

Then to the Bishop, we owe high honor and profound respect; he is the hand, the heart, the mouthpiece of the Pope, and of Jesus Christ; he is a successor of the apostles, seated on the steps of the pontifical throne and sharing in the spiritual royalty of the Sovereign Pontiff.

To the pastors, to the priests, we owe religious respect and angelical honors; they are, as it were, the "angels" of the New Testament, the ambassadors of heaven, the ministers of God.

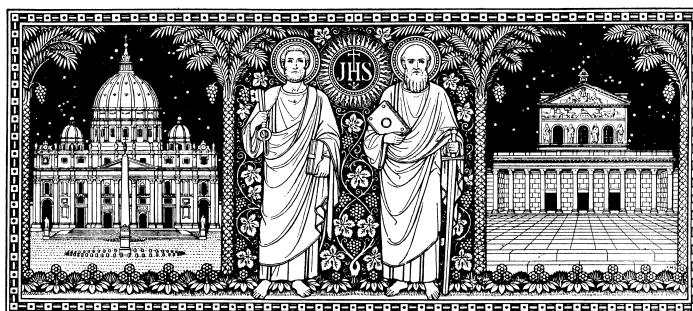
To despise the priest, to sin against him, would be to sin against Jesus Christ Himself. "*He who despises you despises Me*," said the Savior. He has said through the Prophets: "*Lay no hand on them ... servants anointed.*" A violation of this command calls for the most terrible chastisements. For he who sins against the priest strikes at the teacher, the mainstay, the channel of Catholic Faith; and he is himself justly punished by the weakening and loss of faith. And since, usually, there is no remission of sins without the priest, no Eucharist without the priesthood, and no charity without this fire which feeds it unceasingly, he who no longer believes in the priesthood is lost. That is why the enemies of Jesus Christ attack the members of His priesthood with such treachery and fury; they correctly perceive such an attack as a most effective means to

paralyze the power of faith and destroy religion in the heart of the faithful. The spiritual battle of the antichrist will center on the priesthood and the eternal Sacrifice, said the Prophet Daniel. This battle has already begun and is growing in intensity. Let the faithful, therefore, beware of the devilish stratagems of their enemies who, in order to destroy faith in their priests, never cease to point out their human frailties and, if need be, to calumniate them so as to render them despicable and an object of scandal to the faithful. Let the faithful close ranks around their faithful priests as around their spiritual commanders; let them defend their divine mission and honor their priesthood; let them, out of filial piety, overlook the failings of human nature to which Jesus Christ leaves His priests subject in order to keep them humble and to oblige the Christian to practice charity and to supernaturalize his faith; let them, out of sorrow, pray for those priests that have fallen.

Love. – We love the mother that has given us life, the father that provides and protects, devoting himself to our good. Similarly, the Church is the Mother of our souls. She has brought us into the world for Jesus Christ amidst the sufferings of martyrdom. She gives us spiritual life; a life than *no one* can take away from us (one can only lose it by his own sins). She educates us for life eternal that through Jesus Christ we may share God's very glory and happiness. A tender and watchful Mother, She guides and sustains our steps amidst the perils and dangers of life, defends us against the attacks of our enemies, dresses our wounds, works and suffers with us; and She will not leave us until our eyes are closed to the light of day, our last words have crossed our dying lips, and our heart has stopped beating. Then, taking our souls, She lifts them to the bosom of God, their Creator and Savior, after

having purified and blessed them and clothed them with Her merits. Her love will even follow the soul to Purgatory; there She can still use Her power of expiation and of prayer. Her mission of salvation stops only at the gates of Heaven. Who can help loving such a good and tender Mother? Who can also help loving the Pope, the common Father of the faithful, to whom Jesus Christ has given a heart as great as the world and greater than all our needs? And who will refuse to the Bishops and priests, to the shepherds of our souls, the filial piety that lightens their burden, formidable even to angels, that encourages their zeal, consoles them in their tribulations and comforts them in their sufferings? They are fathers, fathers of an immense family, fathers with no support other than the Divine Providence that has sent them into the world like Jesus Christ.

Obedience. – Every Christian owes to the Supreme Head of the Church, in all that concerns his divine mission, an obedience of faith at the risk of becoming guilty of rebellion or of heresy: "*if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.*" (Matt. 18:17). Even when against civil rulings (which in such cases have neither authority nor jurisdiction) the Christian owes filial obedience to Canon



Law, to the Papal Bulls, to the decrees and decisions of the Holy Roman Church, which are but the voice, the law, the teaching of the Sovereign Pontiff. This holds true even in cases when civil laws may oppose ecclesial ones (in such cases the secular authority acts unjustly and therefore those particular precepts have neither authority nor jurisdiction).

The obedient Christian goes beyond the letter of the law and of authority. He considers the intention of the legislator, whose counsels are orders. He wants in all things to think, speak, and act as his fathers in the Faith have always thought, spoken, and acted.

This same obedience is also rendered to the Bishop as the Shepherd closest to us, who transmits in all their purity and genuineness the teachings of the Church, the infallible word of Peter; who keeps watch over the deposit of Faith, the integrity of morals, and the strict observance of the divine and ecclesiastical laws; and who holds the powers to legislate and teach in matters of doctrine and morals.

We owe again this same obedience to our immediate Pastor in the discharge of his pastoral office. The Bishop and the Pope govern us through him. He has to give God an account of all the souls entrusted to him. The faithful sheep of the fold follow their Pastor; they know his voice and they obey him.

Assistance. – A child owes assistance to his aging or needy parents; the honorable son not only recognizes this grave duty, but delights in it. He finds order and happiness in fulfilling this duty. The Christian owes assistance to the priest of Jesus Christ, his father in the Faith, and the minister of the Most Holy Eucharist. Christian sentiment would revolt at the mere thought of a Pastor's not having even the bread of charity and the assistance usually given to the needy.

The faithful, however, should assist their pastor especially in their works of zeal for the salvation of souls, in what concerns the decorum and dignity of the articles of worship and in the Christ-like care of the sick. Insofar as their state of life permits and within the sphere of their legitimate influence, the faithful also assist the Church in the propagation and defense of the one true Faith and all of the Church's venerable and holy Tradition. These works, under the direction and the grace of the priesthood, are truly apostolic and consistently productive of good. The ungodly pool their strength for evil purposes; the good should do as much for sacred purposes. To the associations of evil men who are becoming so powerful, we must oppose with the associations of faithful souls. An isolated effort for good is too weak, and it dies out with the one that starts it.

But to which works should we devote ourselves in preference to others? To Catholic works, to those which have the approval of the Church, and which the priesthood inspires and blesses; for error can easily creep in under cover of pious works, and even disguise itself as piety. When confronted with a work, we must first look into its legitimacy, whether it comes from the Church, whether it is faith-inspired, and whether its end, and the means employed, are truly Christian. A work that is only human or philanthropic, that limits itself to the body, to matters of this world only, is a work for a philosopher or a humanist, but not for a Christian. But among works, we must devote

ourselves more to those that give greater glory to God, that have as their direct object the honoring of His divine Persons, the exaltation and recognition of the rights of His kingship. For the divine Head of the Church must have in everything the first-fruits of our service and devotion.

BESIDES HIS DUTIES toward His Majesty, Jesus Christ, towards Christ's blessed Mother, the ever Virgin Mary, and towards Christ's Spouse, the Church, the faithful Catholic has obligations toward *"the least of Christ's brethren,"* that is, his fellow men and the society of which he is a part. As a member of a family, he has common duties to fulfill; as a member of society, he has relations to maintain; as a citizen, he has laws to obey.

In order to be a true follower of His Majesty, with regard to his social obligations, the Christian will practice faithfully and generously the three following virtues:

Justice. – Justice is the virtue by which a man gives every man his due. A Christian practices justice by keeping the law; observing all the laws that are just and fair; seeking no exemption or privilege from the common law but, after the example

of the divine Master, fulfilling it to the last jot and tittle. Every law that is made by legitimate authority and that is just of its nature comes from God.

Truth. – Truth is the conformity between thought and thing. The Christian takes truth as the inflexible rule of his personal conduct and as the standard of all his words; he is never ashamed of divine Truth, which is tantamount to being ashamed of God, nor of human truth, which is likewise tantamount to being ashamed of human reason. He defends the truth generously by his works and apostolate, or at least by his respect of the truth and his profession of faith in the truth.

Charity. – Charity is love of friendship, wanting the best for the other. Thus, Christians strive to avoid every word of criticism or of disdain of others; never judging his neighbor's interior or condemning him unless he has the mission to do so, according to the words of Jesus Christ: *"Judge nobody, and you will not be judged; condemn nobody, and you will not be condemned... the measure you award to others is the measure that will be awarded to you"* (Luke 6:37-38). Doing good to his neighbor, first according to his obligations to each one, and then according to his means. Wishing well to all, even to his enemies; always ready to forgive the repentant, to make the first move towards the one offended. *"That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust"* (Matt 5:45).

AT FATIMA, the angel, depicted in the vision part of the Third Secret, repeated the request of Our Lady of Lourdes: *Penance! Penance! Penance!* With this penance performed, the heavenly Queen is depicted in the same vision as putting out the flames of God's wrath coming upon the world! If faithful Christians do penance according to their duties of state, they will surely be aided by God's grace in all their endeavors and receive the protection of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts against all dangers, as well as help Our Lady in fulfilling the Fatima promises... *"In the end, My Immaculate Heart with triumph."*

