

# Official Translation Of Papal Encyclical Establishing Marian Year

(U.S.A. N.C.W.C. News Service)

Vatican City, Sept. 11—Following is the official English text, prepared at the Vatican, of the Encyclical Letter "Fulgens Corona" (Shining Crown) which was released today. In the document the Holy Father calls the faithful throughout the world to join in the observance of a Marian Year, beginning next December, to mark the centenary of the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception dogma.

## Encyclical Letter Of His Holiness Pius XII By Divine Providence Pope To Our Venerable Brethren

The Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops and other local ordinaries in peace and communion with the Apostolic See.

A Marian Year is proclaimed to be celebrated throughout the world on the occasion of the first centenary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Venerable brethren, health and apostolic benediction.

The radiant crown of glory, with which the most pure brow of the Virgin Mother was encircled by God, seems to us to shine more brilliantly, as We recall to mind the day, on which, one hundred years ago, Our Predecessor of happy memory Pius IX, surrounded by a vast retinue of Cardinals and Bishops, with infallible apostolic authority defined, pronounced and solemnly sanctioned "that the doctrine, which holds that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary at the first moment of her conception was, by singular grace and privilege of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the Human race, preserved from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God, and therefore to be firmly and resolutely believed by all the faithful." (Dogmatic bull "Ineffabilis Deus," of Dec. 8, 1854.)

The entire Catholic world rejoiced with joy the proclamation of the Pontiff, so long anxiously awaited. Devotion of the faithful to the Virgin Mother of God was stirred up and increased and this naturally led to a great improvement in Christian morality. Furthermore, studies were undertaken with new enthusiasm, which gave rise to a new interest in the dignity and sanctity of the Mother of God.

Moreover, it seems that the Blessed Virgin Mary herself wished to confirm by some special sign the definition, which the Vicar of her Divine Son on earth had pronounced and the approval of the whole Church. For indeed four years had not yet elapsed when, in a French town at the foot of the Pyrenees, the Virgin Mother, youthful and simple in appearance, clothed in a simple white garment, covered with a white mantle and adorned with a simple and innocent heart, to a simple and innocent girl at the grove of Massabieille. And to the same girl, earnestly inquiring the name of her with whose vision she appeared, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

This was generally interpreted by the faithful, who from all nations, and almost countless in number, witnessed in pious pilgrimage to the grove of Lourdes, the apparition of the Virgin Mother. Faith, evidenced that the apparition was not a mere fancy, but a supernatural event, which was granted them which should be considered as a sign of the sanctification of her, and which the Catholic religion is the only one given approved by God.

In a special manner was its significance grasped by the Roman people, and when, in the space of a few years, the devotion of clergy and people had reached such a wonderful height, that a small spiritual house, built in the place of the apparition, was erected. From these words, it is clearly apparent that there is only one thing which all holy men and women about whom God can be said to have spoken, and that is, that she obtained this singular privilege, never granted to anyone else, because she was raised to the dignity of Mother of God.

These words, which the Council of Ephesus solemnly defined and proclaimed, and which the Council of Trent, in its second session, solemnly confirmed, have become the daily prayer of the people, and the source of their faith and hope. The writings of the Fathers bear witness to the fact that the Virgin Mother of God, in the Roman Pontiff's clear and simple language, the ancient liturgy, in which she is invoked as the Mother of God, has been proclaimed in the most solemn manner, and that she is the Mother of God.

Wherefore, right from ancient Church times, this act of devotion, the both among pagans and in the minds and hearts of the people became daily more illustrious and more widespread. The writings of the Fathers bear witness to the fact that the Virgin Mother of God, in the Roman Pontiff's clear and simple language, the ancient liturgy, in which she is invoked as the Mother of God, has been proclaimed in the most solemn manner, and that she is the Mother of God.



His Holiness Pope Pius XII  
... Proclaims Marian Year

The Blessed Virgin ... is the purest and the most holy, so that under God a greater purity cannot be understood" (Cornelius a Lapide, in Matth. 1, 16). And again, if we consider the matter with attention, and especially if we consider the burning and sweet love which Almighty God without doubt had, and has for the mother of His only-begotten Son, for what reason can we even think that she should be subject to the same destitution of divine grace? Almighty God could certainly, by the merits of the Redeemer, bestow on her this singular privilege; that therefore He did not do so, we cannot even suppose. It was fitting that Jesus Christ should have such a mother, as far as possible; and she would not have been worthy, if contained by the hereditary stain ever for the first moment only of her conception, she had been subject to the abominable power of Satan.

Nor can it be asserted that the Redemption by Christ was on this account lessened, as if it did not extend to the whole race of Adam; and therefore something taken away from the office and dignity of the Divine Redeemer. For if we carefully and thoroughly consider the matter, we easily perceive that Christ the Lord in a certain most perfect manner really redeemed His mother, since it was by virtue of his merits that she was preserved by God immune from all stain of original sin. Wherefore, the infinite dignity of Jesus Christ and his office of universal redemption is not diminished nor lowered by this tenet of doctrine, rather it is greatly increased.

Non-Catholics and reformers are therefore mistaken when because of this tenet they are faulted with, or despised of, our devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. As if it took something from the worship due to God alone and to Jesus Christ. The contrary is the case; our honor and veneration which we may give to our Heavenly Mother undoubtedly responds to the glory of her Divine Son, not only because all right and all gifts, even the highest, flow from Him as from their primary source, but also because "the glory of children are their fathers" (Book of Proverbs, XVII, 6).

And so these two very singular privileges, bestowed upon the Mother of God, stand out in the most splendid light as the beginning and the end of her journey for the greatest possible glorification of her Divine Son. The complement, at once appropriate and marvelous, of the absolute innocence of her soul, which was free from all stain, and just as she took part in the struggle of her only-begotten Son with the wicked serpent of Hell, so also she shared His glorious triumph over sin and its consequences.

This centenary celebration should not only serve to revive Catholic faith and devotion to the Mother of God in the world at all, but Christians should also, as far as possible, imitate her life, in the image of the same Virgin. For in all matters are deeply affected when they perceive that as if they were to be considered

the countenance of their children reflects a peculiar likeness to their own, so also our Most Sweet Mother rejoices for nothing more, never rejoices more than when she sees those whom, under the cross of her Son, she has adopted as children in her stead, portray the lineaments and ornaments of her own soul in thought, word and deed.

But if this devotion is not to consist of mere words, it is to be counterfeited in religion, or the weak and transitory affection of a moment, but is to be something sincere, true and efficacious, it is necessary that each one of us should, according to his condition of life avail of it for the acquisition of virtue. The commemoration of the mystery of the Most Holy Virgin, conceived immaculate and immune from all stain of original sin, should, in the first place, urge us to that innocence and integrity of life which flows from and abhors even the slightest stain of sin.

It seems to us that the Blessed Virgin, who throughout the whole course of her life—both in joys, which affected her deeply, as in distress and atrocious suffering, through which she departed from the precepts and example of her own Divine Son, it seems to us, We say, that she repeats to each of us those words which she addressed to the servers at the wedding feast of Cana, pointing as it were to Jesus Christ: "Whatever He shall say to you, do ye" (John 2, 5).

This same exhortation, understood, of course, in a wider sense, she seems to repeat to us all today, when it is evident that the root of all evils by which men and peoples and nations afflicted, has its origin in this earthly, that many people have forsaken Him "the fountain of living water and have dug for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2, 13) They have forsaken Him Who is the "Way the truth and the life" (John XIV, 6).

If, therefore, there has been a wandering, there must be a return to the straight path. If the darkness of error has clouded minds, it must be dispersed immediately by the light of truth. If death, in the true sense, has seized upon souls, eagerly and heretically must life be taken hold of. We mean that heavenly life which knows no ending, since it comes forth from Jesus Christ; which, if we faithfully and confidently pursue in this mortal exile, we shall surely enjoy for ever with Him in the happiness of the eternal home. This is what she teaches us; to this the Blessed Virgin Mary exhorts us, our Most Sweet Mother who, with true clarity, loves us more than any earthly

TODAY, AS YOU well know, venerable brethren, men are greatly in need of these exhortations and invitations by which they are admonished to return to Christ and diligently and effectively to conform their lives to the Commandments, since many are trying to root out the Christian Faith from their souls, snared by cunning and secret rogues, or else by open and arrogant preaching of those errors of which they wantonly boast, as if they were to be considered

the glory of this progressive and enlightened age.

But once holy religion is rejected, once the Divine Will, determining what is good and evil, is ignored, it is plain that laws and public authority have little or no value. Then again, once hope and expectations of eternal reward are lost through these fallacious doctrines, men will greedily and without restraint seek the things of earth, vehemently covet their neighbor's goods, and even take them by force as often as occasion offers. Hence that rivalry and envy, discord and rivalries that among men; hence public and private life is perturbed; hence the very foundations of society which can scarcely be held together and maintained by the authority of government are gradually undermined; hence, deformation of morals by evil theatrical performances, books, periodicals and actual crime.

We do not doubt that much can be done in this cause by those who hold the reins of government. However, the remedy for such great evils is to be sought from a higher source; namely, a power that is greater than human must be called in as aid, which will illumine minds with heavenly light, which will touch souls and renew them with Divine grace and render them better by its inspiration.

Then only can it be hoped that Christian morality will everywhere again flourish; that the true principles upon which society depends will become consolidated; that mutual, impartial and sincere estimations of values together with justice and charity, will be established among the different classes; that finally hatred will be quelled, whose seeds bring forth new miseries, and not rare provoke exasperated souls to the shedding of blood—that, in fine, having mellowed and set up the contentions between the upper and lower classes, the sacred rights of both parties be mutually agreed and reasonableness be made conformable and consistent with the public utility.

Without doubt, all these principles of Christianity, which the Virgin Mother of God incites us to follow with eagerness and with energy, can be entirely and lovingly productive only when actually put into practice. Taking this into consideration, we invite each and every one of you, venerable Brethren, by reason of the office that you exercise, to the clergy and people committed to you to celebrate the Marian Year which We propose to be held the whole world over from the month of December next until the same month of the coming year. Just a century having elapsed since the Virgin Mother of God, amid the applause of the entire Christian people, she with a new gem, when, as We have said, Our Predecessor of immortal memory solemnly decreed and defined that she was absolutely free from all stain of original sin. And we confidently trust that this Marian celebration may bring forth those most desired and salutary fruits which all of us long for.

BUT TO facilitate matters and make the project more successful, We desire that in each diocese there be held for this purpose appropriate sermons and discourses, by means of which this tenet of Christian doctrine may be more clearly explained; so that the Faith of the people may be increased and their devotion to the Virgin Mother of God become daily more inflamed, and that therefore all may take upon themselves to follow in the footsteps of our heavenly Mother, willingly and with promptitude.

And since in all cities, towns and villages, wherever the Christian religion thrives, there is a sanctuary, or a least an altar, in which the sacred image of the Blessed Virgin Mary is enshrined for the devotion of the Christian People, We desire, Venerable Brethren, that the faithful should through their in great numbers and should offer to our Most Sweet Mother not only private but also public supplications with one voice and with one mind.

But where—as in the case of almost all dioceses, there exists a church in which the Virgin Mother of God is worshipped with more intense devotion, thither on stated days let pilgrims flock together in great numbers and publicly and in the open give glorious expression to their common Faith and their common love toward the Virgin Most Holy. We have no doubt that this will be done in an especial manner at the Grotto of Lourdes, where there is such ardent devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived without stain.

But in this holy city of Rome be the first to give the example, this city which from the earliest Christian days worshipped the heavenly Mother, its patroness, with a special devotion. As all know, there are many sacred edifices, in which she is not properly, train the youth in

Roman people; but the greatest without doubt is the Libreria

Basilica, in which the mosaics of Our predecessor of pious memory still glisten, an outstanding monument to the Divine maternity of the Virgin Mary, and in which the "salvation of the Roman people" (Salus Populi Romani) benignly smiles.

Thither especially let the suppliant citizens flock, and before that most sacred image let all put forth pious prayers, imploring especially that Rome, which is the principal city of the Catholic world, may also give the lead in Faith, in piety and in sanctity. For, We address you, children of Rome, in the words of Our predecessor of saintly memory, Leo the Great, "although the whole Church, which is in the good and an increase of common concord."

We desire in the first place to direct Our exhortation to those inspired by ardent charity, to those who, reduced to silence and trapped by all sorts of cunning snares, look with anguish of soul at the affliction and distress of their Christian community, left destitute of all human help. Let these, our dearly beloved

brothers, also join with us and all other Christians in invoking before the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation (1 Cor. 1, 3) the most powerful patronage of the Virgin Mother of God, our mother also, and let them ask her for heavenly aid and Divine consolation. Preserving in the ancient Faith with undaunted courage, let them take as their motto of Christian fortitude in this time of trial the words of the Mellifluous Doctor: "We shall stand and fight to death, if needs be, for the Church! Our hearts, and with lawful weapons; not with sword and shield, but with prayers and signs to God" (St. Bernard, Epistle 221, 3; Migne P.L. 182, 36, 387).

FURTHERMORE, WE call on those also who are separated from Us by ancient schism and whom none the less We love with paternal affection to unite in pouring forth these joint prayers and supplications, knowing full well how greatly they venerate the Mother of Jesus Christ and celebrate the Immaculate Conception. May the same Blessed Virgin Mary look down on all those who are proud to call themselves Christians and who, being united at least by the bond of charity, humbly raise their eyes, their minds and their prayers, imploring that light which illumines the mind with heavenly rays, and begging for that unity by which at last there may be one fold and one shepherd (cf. John 10, 16).

To those unanimous prayers, added works of penance should be done for the effect of devotion to prayer is this: "The soul is sustained, is prepared for arduous deeds and ascends to the Divine. The effect of penance is that we control ourselves, especially our body, the greatest enemy because of original sin, by reason and by the law of the Gospel. It is clear that these two virtues are intimately connected, help one another, and combine to withdraw man, who was born for Heaven, from transitory things and all that carries him to heavenly intimacy with God" (Leo XIII, XI, P. 312).

Since, however, solid, sincere and tranquil peace has not yet appeared in this world, and among peoples, let all strive with prayer to fully and fruitfully obtain and consolidate it, so that, just as the Most Blessed Virgin brought forth the prince of Peace, so also may she, by her protection and patronage, unite men in friendly agreement. For then only can they enjoy what ever peaceful prosperity may be given to us during the course of this mortal life, when they are not divided by rivalries, not forced into opposite camps by threats and intrigues; but when, joining hands in friendly affection, they exchange the kiss of peace, which is peace (which is tranquillity) (cf. Phil. 11, 44), and which, guided by justice and nurtured by charity, unites in one harmonious family the various classes of citizens, nations and people.

May the Divine Redeemer, moved by the favor and intercession of His most benign Mother, grant the widest and most fruitful effects to these Our most ardent desires, to which will respond. We are sure the wishes, not only of Our own children but also of all those who have at heart the interests of Christian culture and the progress of civil life.

Meanwhile, may the Apostolic Benediction which We impart most lovingly in the Lord to all of you, venerable brethren, as also to your clergy and people, be a pledge of heavenly gifts and a token of Our paternal benevolence. Given at St. Peter's, Rome, on the eighth day of September, on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 1958, the fiftieth of Our Pontificate. Plus PP. XII.