


*Memorandum to Cardinal
Michael Angelo Tonti
(english)*



*T*here is no doubt that among the greatest acts of the Supreme Pontiffs as Vicars of Christ on Earth other than the canonisation of Saints, is perhaps the approval of new Religious Orders.

There is something that, if it comes from God, it will result in the greatest honour of the Church, to help and enlighten the neighbour, favour religious and praise His Divine Majesty. His Divine Majesty bestows on men the ability to live like angels on earth, dead to the world, insensible to the sense and detached from the delights of the flesh; changing from free men to slaves, from learned to ignorant, from being sociable to solitary. In a word, from being earthly to spiritual and celestial. But, if it does not come from God, the Institute falls into confusion; the councils and convents into conventicles and unlawful assemblies and the holy and divine work becomes abominable and diabolic.

Indeed, the Fathers of the Fourth Lateran Council, with great zeal, in the last chapter *De domibus religiosis*

(*On Religious Houses*), prohibited the foundation of new Orders. As it was expressly stated to avoid confusion and multiplicity of the same it seemed enough to them to ban the establishment of new ones. Anyone wishing to enter religious life could choose any of the already existing Orders. If anyone felt the urge to become a founder he could take refuge and flight in one of the Orders already approved.

These reasons gave sufficient motives to the Supreme pontiffs to proceed in this matter with greater circumspection and caution. They have also given them sufficient reason to declare tacitly that the Council was to prohibit only those that were superfluous and redundant, but not to forbid others, especially those for a particular, necessity and special goal in the Church of God.

The Pious Schools are to be found among these. Their goal is the most necessary and basic for the reform of vitiated customs of this world. According to the opinion of all, ecclesiastics, laymen, princes, rulers and subjects, the most necessary and basic ministry is the good education of the youth on which a good or bad

future life depends. The Councils of Chalcedony and Trent, Saints Basil, Jerome, Benedict and Ignatius all held the same idea.

Therefore, there is no doubt that to be favoured and endowed with that name cannot be denied to a Congregation which has already truly performed and observed the actions of a religious Order. A title which has not been denied to so many others which exercise a ministry not as useful and necessary as ours and perhaps are not applauded and so desired by all. They are not solicited as this one which, after only a few years is asked for and requested by so many.

The teaching profession is truly the most worthy, most noble, most meritorious, most beneficial, most useful, most necessary, most natural, most reasonable, most worthy of thanks, most pleasing and most glorious.

It is most worthy because it deals with the salvation of body and soul.

It is most noble because it is an angelic and divine ministry exercised by guardian angels with whom teachers become co-operators.

It is most meritorious because it performs throughout the entire Church the most effective remedy for the protection and eradication of evil. It is the incentive and stimulus to do good for youth of all classes as well as all men who must necessarily pass through that first stage of life. This is accomplished by education, good habits and manners, with illumination from God and of the world...

It is most beneficial because it helps all in all, without exception, providing them with all that is necessary teaching all children and including the accompanying of them to their homes.

It is most useful because of the changes seen in the life of children who are unrecognisable from what they were before they entered the school.

It is most necessary because of the corruption of morals and lure of vices which dominate those who have been badly educated. It is necessary also for the needs of the Church for which the boys attending Continuous Prayer intercede as they take turns in the oratory.

It is most natural because everybody instinctively wants what is the best education for his sons.

It is most reasonable, for princes and lords who are

very much interested in having vassals and citizens who are temperate, obedient, well disciplined, faithful, peaceful and capable of sanctifying themselves here and being great in the kingdom of heaven They are also fit to ennoble and promote not only themselves but also their country acquiring positions in the government and dignities here on earth. This may be understood better by looking at the contrary defects of those who lack education and who by their injurious actions disturb peace and disquiet people.

It is most worthy of thanks not only as demonstrated by citizens in general who universally applaud and request it for their respective countries, but also in particular instances by learned men preoccupied with the welfare of the universal reform of depraved customs. Men who understand that this cannot be accomplished without carefully cultivating those tender plants, the boys, setting them straight before they grow hardened when it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to correct them. This is so often evident in the case of mature men, who in spite of many prayers, sermons and the sacraments rarely change their lives and are really converted. Education is also gratefully viewed by God, for if the conversion of one sinner is pleasing to the inhabitants of heaven, how much more will they rejoice over the one who by education is turned toward the Divine Majesty, and still more over those who are daily preserved in their baptismal innocence. These, indeed, are consequently freed from eternal damnation. On the other hand, how many young people if they were to die, would be damned for sins they have committed deliberately, without scruples, or who confessed them without contrition, or perhaps omitted them in confession.

It is most pleasing for those called to work in this vineyard where the harvest is so abundant.

It is most glorious for the religious and those who practice and promote it with their authority and favours. For the Supreme Pontiff to establish and approve it as a religious Order as it was for his predecessors who approved previous Orders, and finally for God because this ministry prevents so many offences, alleviates so many sufferings, even temporal ones and saves and sanctifies so many souls who will forever thank the new Order and praise God forever.

The numerous existing Orders ought not to be an obstacle nor must the prohibition of the Council mentioned above because variety is a marvellous ornament of

the Church. David said: The queen takes her place at your right hand in gold and ophir. Furthermore, the abundance of orders should not be regulated by mere numbers.

This should be enough to offer a similar interpretation of the said canon, which far from being contrary to the present request, rather advocates its concession. Because by blaming excessively the abundance of superfluous Orders, it tacitly exalts those which are useful and particular.

This danger of confusion is still less an obstacle. If by confusion with other Orders is meant the habit, ours is different. So, this danger is very remote. A great number of many other Orders like Capuchins, the Franciscans, the Dominicans and the Augustinians in particular, praise our Institute, and send candidates to us and also ask for foundations.

As far as Bishops are concerned, not all object, because they go out of their way to introduce our schools in their diocese. This is worthy of mature consideration.

As for mendicancy, it is not injurious to the other Orders because, if they are mendicants, it gives them an occasion to trust more in Divine Providence. For to support themselves by the practice of mendicancy they must give continual good example to collect sufficient alms. If they are secular, the issue is irrelevant (since they do not live on alms) and it would be holy pressure to force them to live in such a way as to be obliged to accept the invitation to the banquet of that Lord in the Gospel. Nor it would be harmful to them because in addition to trusting in God, they have as many pledges of provisions for their needs as there are children in the schools.

If anyone insists that education is sufficiently provided for by seminaries, the Jesuit Fathers and the secular teachers, this does nothing more than confirm the general opinion about the necessity of education as a unique medium of reform of customs.

Indeed, even if secular teachers had the necessary charity, did not shun fatigue and once the need ceased to exist did not do what the Gospel says: A hired man flees because he has no concern for the sheep, and that is because boys learn more about vice than virtue. And even if seminaries in the diocese, according to the Council, were not only to form good shepherds but also obedient sheep they could only educate a small number. And supposing that the Jesuits had permission, in


conformity to their ministry, to work in small towns and among poor people - who are the most abundant in the world - are admitted in many states and republics and when they do not accept them denying themselves a greater good. Being this a true fact, there is another principal argument: the world is large; the harvest is great; the labourers are few.

After showing the usefulness and need of this work, that welcomes all individuals, conditions and places and provides a complete instruction in the fundamentals of learning and the necessary means to make a living, it logically follows the need to establish it as a religious Order to prevent it from disappearing in the future. This could easily happen if a member, after starting in it, were to abandon it, and fooled by the devil or the world. A member could easily look back and dodge the strenuous and repugnant work unless he were bound with strong ties such a solemn vows.

It also follows that the Institute needs to expand and propagate itself according to the needs, desires, and petitions of so many. These cannot be done without many labourers. Those cannot easily be secured if they lack great generosity and a call to this particular ministry. Generally speaking, those called to abandon the world being only beginners, still need to be weaned from the comforts of the world. They will always prefer, as experience shows us, an Order already approved where after finishing the noviciate, they will enjoy a secure life and be ordained to the priesthood over a Congregation where instead of all those advantages, they will find difficulties coming from a life full of mortifications coming from the obligation of being with poor boys, tiring because of the constant efforts brought about by a constant, demanding profession which is detestable by the flesh that considers contemptible the education of the children of the poor. In addition, there is the impediment of having professed in another Order.

Finally, our Holy Mother the Church has been used to grant solemn vows to so many other ministries, why not to this one which is a compendium of all the others? In case of necessity it helps people in all that other Institutes assist them, and beyond this, by means of a good education it habitually trains and prepares souls to be able to receive the fruits of all other ministries.

For if in the morning we foretell the weather for the rest of the day and from good beginnings a good end, and



the rest of life's journey depends on the education received in tender childhood - the good odour is never lost as in the case of a vessel that once contained good liquor - who cannot see that so much greater advantage and facility will be experienced by other religious Institutes in the exercise of their ministries the greater has been the preparation of some individuals by a good education?

If our Holy Church has conceded the elevation to the rank of an Order to so many Institutes of general and common ministries, why not to one with a particular and specific ministry? If the Church has granted it to so many Institutes with a particular ministry, perhaps not so necessary or at least not so solicited, why not to this one so necessary and so much requested? If that favour has been granted to those that help to care for the sick and rescue captives, why not to those who cure, preserve and redeem souls? If it has been granted to those who exercise a general or particular ministry in active life only or to those who lead a contemplative life, why is the favour to be denied to those who with one and the other ministry live a mixed life which is more perfect? If it has been granted to the Jesuits - who have such a variety of vows - mostly for the advantage of important and noble individuals, why should it not be granted to the poor of the Mother of God to make three solemn vows, after a long test of a two year novitiate, and who work for cities and persons preferably poor, and, those who need a lot of assistance? If this favour has been granted to those who help people to die well, is it not more reasonable to grant it to those who help others from their tender year to lead a good life on which depends not only a good death but also the peace and tranquillity of peoples, good government of cities and princes, the obedience and fidelity of subjects, the propagation of the faith, the conversion of heretics and preservation from heresies - especially young men whom heretics try to infect with false doctrines in early years almost certain that they can count on them the rest of their life - and finally, the reform of all Christianity by means of poor, and this simple men of apostolic life, whom Saint Vincent Ferrer prophesied. A prophesy which has been interpreted and referred to these religious by a man of holy and miraculous life in the early beginnings of this Institute?

Therefore ...