

ANOTHER LEO XIII

St Michael the Archangel, defend us in the day of battle; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the Devil...¹

Since 1903 the Church has had strong popes and popes who stood in the breach against the powers of hell: it has had popes who were saints. But none has matched the intellectual stature or breadth of vision to tackle the world's evils of Leo XIII (Gioacchino Pecci) who died in July of that year.

Leo's breadth of vision may be seen in the topics of the encyclicals and apostolic letters that marked his 25 year pontificate.² Apart from the multitude dealing with theological issues there are encyclicals on—

The restoration of Christian philosophy	<i>Aeterni Patris</i> (4.8.1879)
<i>Freemasonry</i>	<i>Humanum Genus</i> (20.4.1884)
	<i>Dall'alto Dell'apostolico Seggio</i> (15.10.1890)
	<i>Inimica Vis</i> (8.12.1892)
	<i>Custodi di Quella Fede</i> (8.12.1892)
<i>The Evils of Society</i>	<i>Inscrutabili Dei Consilio</i> (21.4.1878)
<i>The Christian Constitution of States</i>	<i>Immortale Dei</i> (1.11.1885)
<i>Human Liberty</i>	<i>Libertas Praestantissimum</i> (20.6.1888)
<i>Socialism</i>	<i>Quod Apostolici Muneris</i> (28.12.1878)
<i>The Liberty of the Church</i>	<i>Quod Multum</i> (22.8.1886)
<i>Capital and Labour</i>	<i>Rerum Novarum</i> (15.5.1891)
<i>Christians as Citizens</i>	<i>Sapientiae Christianae</i> (10.1.1890)

The most celebrated of these is *Rerum Novarum*. But the most significant, because the most profound in its implications, is *Libertas Praestantissimum* where the Pope set forth the sound reasoning behind the infallible condemnation by his predecessor, Pius IX, of the proposition—

“Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, led by the light of reason, he thinks to be the true religion.”³

Here Pius IX formally endorsed the teaching of *his* predecessor, Gregory XVI (1831-1846), in the encyclical *Mirari vos* (August 15th, 1832) condemning certain propositions of the French priest, Félicité de Lamennais. The bishops of the Second Vatican Council so far forgot their duties to the Church and the faithful that they ignored this infallible teaching and taught its contrary.⁴

On October 13th, 1884, after he had celebrated Mass in the presence of Cardinals and members of the Vatican staff, it is said Leo XIII experienced a vision of the future of the Church in which the powers of Satan would be unleashed for a period of one hundred years. He was so shaken by the spectre of the destruction of moral and

¹ Opening stanza of the prayer to St Michael composed by Pope Leo XIII.

² Cf. Papal Encyclicals on line at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/index.htm>

³ Proposition n. 15 in the *Syllabus of Errors* attached to the encyclical, *Quanta Cura*, on 8th December, 1864.

⁴ The issue is addressed in the author's paper *The Trouble With Dignitatis Humanae* at http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/dignitatis_humanae_1.pdf

spiritual values both inside and outside the Church that he composed prayers to aid the Catholic faithful. These prayers were said every week in Catholic churches throughout the world until the introduction of the new order of the Mass (novus ordo) in the 1960s. The first was to Almighty God for the conversion of sinners and for the liberty and exaltation of His holy Church; the second, invoked the aid of St Michael the Archangel to defend us from the wickedness and snares of the Devil.⁵ In many churches, especially in those in which the Tridentine rite of Mass is celebrated, the prayers have been re-introduced.

Who having observed the devastation that has befallen the Catholic faithful, especially among priests and religious, since the Second Vatican Council could doubt the reality conveyed by that vision?

Far too much has been conceded by the Church's ministers to the secular world enthralled with ideology. The failure to speak and to condemn has allowed error to flourish throughout the world.⁶

It is only a matter of time before the Holy Spirit provides His holy Church with another pope with the force of character and grasp of principle to expose the provenance of these evils and show how they are to be combatted. It is only a matter of time before he sends us another Leo XIII. Hasten the day!

Michael Baker

13th January, 2010—*St Hilary of Poitiers, Bishop and Doctor of the Church*

⁵ Cf. the paper *Leo XIII and the 100 years* at http://www.superflumina.org/leo_xiii_the_100_years.html

⁶ An inevitable consequence of the permission granted to error by the bishops of the Second Vatican Council in the document *Dignitatis Humanae*.