ATHOS CARRARA

SAN PIO X

dolce operaio di Cristo

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

MASSIMO

Saint Pius X

This easy-to-read biography, accessible to all, regardless of age or culture, offers an interesting insight into the history of the 20th-century Church. Saint Pius X, a true giant given to us by the Holy Spirit as Pope at the beginning of the 20th century, continues to project his image onto our society with significant religious, cultural, social, and even sporting events. For some aspects of the biography, it should be noted that it was written in the early 1950s, so some environmental and social information must be considered in relation to that historical context. The original edition, which sold out, was a remarkable success, with a print run of 10,000 copies.

Giuseppe Carrara

Note: The "Catechism" has been added to the biography, which continues to be a beacon of light in the current religious and social context, worth rereading and experiencing.

THE BRIGHT HOPE

Giovan Battista Sarto was the municipal messenger of Riese and earned fifty cents a day, with which he had to feed himself and his wife and eight children: he earned a penny each, but he had his own house, that little house with ground and first floors, which still remains as it was, a little outside the village, on the sunny road to Asolo. He had the house and two fields, which he worked to perfection, with the help of his children. But his greatest treasure was his wife, Margherita, who from day to day, or rather from before the sun to after the sun, ran the house and the children, helped her husband, and worked as a seamstress. Always serene, always smiling, always ready. And with that wealth, the penny of a daily wage was like a seed that sprouted in the house and produced bread and clothes for everyone, and if something was missing, it was missing for her, but she didn't say so. It was she who guided the

children, but in the evening it was their father who led the prayers and instructed them on those very important things about which he, a humble worker, was instructed and which concerned the life of the soul required everyone, young and old, to examine their consciences. One evening, after prayers and after the children had climbed the stairs to separate into their two bedrooms, Margherita was tidying an altar boy's cassock. It belonged to Giuseppe, the eldest son, who was going to serve Mass at the Santuario delle Cendrole (*), dedicated to the Assumption and not far from home. Margherita was as serene as ever, but Giovan Battista saw that she had something new (when you love someone, a glance is enough to read their soul) and asked her: "What is it?" Margherita raised her sweet and slightly tired eyes from her work: "It's true," she replied with emotion, "that our Giuseppe has become very fond of this little girl." "Do you mean to say," her husband observed with some apprehension, "that he wants to become a priest?" Margherita nodded with a nod of her eyes and Giovan Battista remained silent, then smiled, shaking his head: "With that blond tuft and those mischievous blue eyes, with that restlessness he has, I can't see him dressed as a priest." And immediately he became more serious: "He has strong arms and works better than me: who would help us if he were to leave?"

And who would pay the fees?" At home, the boys saved the shoes and socks they took off as soon as they left school or church, and with a bowl of soup on the table, they were quickly fed. But outside? "At school, he's top of the class, you know?" his mother urged, drawing her husband's attention to the first quality of those who want to study.

Giuseppe wasn't yet eleven years old and hadn't made his First Communion, which

he made when he turned eleven, on April 6, 1847 (he was born on June 2, 1835), because that was the custom then, and a boy, even if he was dying for the Eucharistic Jesus, couldn't be satisfied before that age, because it was believed that only after ten or twelve did they understand what they were doing. Giuseppe Sarto never forgot the painful anxiety of that wait, and when he could, he didn't want other children to suffer that pain. His other children were small, and Only the second, Angelo, was a boy: the daughters were Teresa, Rosa, Antonia, Maria, Lucia, and Anna. The good father found himself in trouble, but he didn't want to get into a fight with God's will and gave his wife a wise answer: "Let's let him make his First Communion, then we'll talk about it again." Margherita, that evening too, was the last to go to bed and cherished that bright hope in her heart.

(*) The Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Cendrole is a Catholic place of worship located in Cendrole, a rural village northwest of Riese Pio X, in the province and diocese of Treviso; it is part of the vicariate of Castello di Godego. (from: "it.Wikipedia.org")

SHOES AROUND THE NECK

Riese is seven kilometers from Castelfranco, in the Veneto plain, beneath Mount Grappa. Castelfranco was not yet the hub of three railways and many bus lines it is today, but a new, vibrant city had already grown around the old castle, attracting from afar those seeking education in the sciences or some trade. In 1846, it attracted Giuseppe Sarto from Riese, who was coming to sit at the high school.

He arrived after walking those seven kilometers, and barefoot, to spare the shoes he carried over his shoulder, along with his books and his lunch bag.

He stopped at the first houses, washed his feet in the ditch water, trapped them in his heavy shoes, straightened his corduroy suit, gave his quiff a tug, and continued on to school without embarrassment or shyness. At noon, he would go to the house of the tax collector Finazzi, a friend of his father's and a gentleman like him, and dump his lunch bag on the table. Finazzi's wife, also a good woman, would top it off with a bowl of hot soup and some warm side dishes. In return, Giuseppe would help the host's children with their homework.

In the evening, at the last houses of Castelfranco, he would take off his shoes again, sling them over his shoulder, and walk the seven kilometers barefoot back home. On the way, he had time to think, to dream, and to pray. He thought about his homework, dreamed of the priesthood, and prayed for get there.

At school, even in Castelfranco, he found no one to beat him throughout the academic year and to the finish line: he remained first. He didn't complain about that life, and once he put away his shoes and jacket, he no longer felt like a student: he remembered being the son of a farmer and helping his father in the fields. But when he heard the bell ring, he thought about his duty as a child of God: he put down his tools, put on his jacket and shoes, and went to help his archpriest, Don Tito Fusarini, who had encouraged him to study and who finally, one unforgettable day, granted him the long-awaited permission to make his First Communion.

At home, they did everything they could to make that day a solemn one, but the lively and sensitive Giuseppe's heart and mind were absorbed only in his encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, a sweet encounter full of promise. At home, Bepi, beaming, hugged his father, brother, and sisters. He saved his mother for last, looked at the tablecloth, glimpsed the bouquets of spring flowers, saw the festive air of the poor and simple family, and said only one word to her: "Thank you!" He waited for his mother's tears to leave her beautiful eyes, and then asked her with great hope: "Did you tell him?" His mother said yes, that she had, and smiled. Giuseppe held her tighter: he had understood that his father was giving his consent to him entering the seminary, when the time was right.

From 1846 for three years, Giuseppe walked those fourteen kilometers a day, between Riese and Castelfranco. His father looked at him, already respecting him as a son who promises extraordinary things, and suffered to see him suffer so many hardships.

He worked harder to save a few lire, and even Mamma Margherita, who noticed, didn't want to be left behind. One evening, in the hour of great silence and sweet solitude, when the children's noise had faded into the light breathing of sleep, Giovan Battista sat down next to his wife, who was mending a pile of stockings: "Margherita," he called her tenderly. The woman looked up, without answering, waiting for the explanation. “Don't you think that boy is too demanding?”

The mother smiled and pretended not to share her opinion: “Boys have plenty

of energy, and Bepi is very strong!”

“But from now on, there will be two of them walking that road: Anzoleto will also go to Castelfranco to learn the carpenter's trade, and don't you think it would be a good idea to provide them with a mount?” Margherita placed a hand on his knee, as she did in her most tender moments: “My dear man, have we become rich?” They hadn't become rich, but they had bought a sturdy donkey and an equally sturdy carriage, and with that astonishing harness, Giuseppe and Angelo enjoyed unforgettable rides between Riese and Castelfranco for a year. It was his last year of school, and in July 1850 he took his final exams at the Treviso seminary, with a brilliant result of “eminent” in all subjects, first among forty-three competitors.

ON YOUR KNEES, BEPI (*)

Archpriest Don Fusarini sent for Giuseppe Sarto and handed him a sealed letter, ordering him: "Open it at home when you're all gathered."

Bepi understood in a flash, and his heart leaped, almost taking his breath away. As soon as he recovered, he ran to the town hall to call his father, shouting the names of his brother and sisters around the house, and soon they were all together in the small room on the ground floor where his mother was working.

Amidst everyone's attention, he tore the envelope open, recognized the handwriting of his parish priest, and read: "On your knees, Bepi, and thank the Lord who surely has some plan for you: soon you will enter the Seminary of Padua, and you too, like me, will be a priest." Giuseppe truly fell to his knees, and the others didn't know how

to behave, too caught up in their emotion.

The day Don Fusarini had said, for the first time, that the boy should be let go to the seminary in Padua, Giovan Battista had responded with a sigh, thinking of his meager pay.

But Don Fusarini hadn't lost heart, and on July 27 (it was the year 1850) he wrote a letter to the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Iacopo Monico, also from Riese and the son of a worker; he wrote that there was a boy in Riese with a vocation but no money.

When Don Fusarini sent for the boy to invite him to get down on his knees, a month had passed, a month that felt like an eternity for the Sarto family.

The first to speak was Mother Margherita, who turned to the others still standing, looking at their older brother, moved and curious. "Children," she said, "Giuseppe is a little abbot: you will no longer address him informally, but formally."

Bepi entered the seminary in November. Those who later researched the memoirs of this exceptional seminarian found this assessment of him in the archives of the Padua seminary: "Irreproachable discipline, superior intelligence, excellent memory, he gives everything to hope for."

In Riese, everyone was proud of the young abbot, and although the town was merely a hamlet of poor people, they found ways to help the family with whatever was needed beyond the tuition, which Cardinal Monico raised from a foundation established by the priest Campion of Bologna for that purpose; they helped with books, clothing, and travel.

Toward the end of his second year at the

seminary, while praying in the chapel and without hearing from home, Giuseppe heard that his father was dying. He ran to his superior and tearfully asked permission to go see him. Giovan Battista Sarto died on May 4, 1852. He had raised, with his wife Margherita, eight children, at the cost of the daily sacrifices of the poor, educating them to love the riches of the soul, which neither the woodworm gnaws nor the thief steals. He could not have imagined, dying peacefully and silently amid the tears of his loved ones, that his humble name as a municipal messenger would be written in the books. Margherita mourned the loss of her loving lifelong companion, dried the sweet tears of a Christian, always filled with hope, looked at her seven children left at home, banished regrets from her soul, and made her decision. She bought what was needed for a small tailoring shop and, with the help of her eldest daughters, saved the customers already crowding at the door. Giuseppe returned to his seminary, with more fervor than before and a light in his soul that grew stronger every day.

That light and harmony were disturbed even by the unattractive voices of the choir and the intrusion of secular motifs into the sacred music. In his final year of seminary, he was appointed director of choir for the clerics and set about training voices and polishing musical scores with profound inner joy.

He frowned, somewhere between serious and witty, and his eyes enchanted the young singers, just as his soul enchanted his superiors, who felt consoled by it for their loving labors.

(*) “Bepi” dialect name of Giuseppe (Joseph)

THE WORKER WITHOUT REST

Deacon Giuseppe Sarto returned to Castelfranco eight years after his last jogs on the road to Riese. He came from Padua, mature in knowledge and piety, but not yet mature in years, and it took a papal dispensation to be ordained a priest, which happened in the cathedral on September 18, 1858, at the age of twenty-three.

Mamma Margherita was waiting for him with her daughters in the little square in front of the cathedral (Angelo wasn't there; he was a robust and enterprising boy and couldn't resist holding a plane in his hand between four walls: he had gone out into the open air, to become a policeman).

It was his big day, patiently awaited for all those years, with thread and prayers.

How beautiful his Bepi was! But she was awed by his embrace, and it was he who held her tightly and told her, without speaking, how happy he was.

Then they left together for Riese, and the next day the whole town celebrated Don Giuseppe Sarto's First Mass.

His mother and sisters saw him consecrate and raise the Holy Host, and received the Bread of Life from his hands: there can be no greater joy in a mother's life.

Don Giuseppe remained with them, spreading the fragrance of his new ordination throughout the town of Riese, for less than a month: his bishop sent him from Treviso the appointment of Chaplain to Tombolo.

His mother looked at him: he was truly a handsome boy, tall and slim,

with a high forehead, abundant hair combed back,

and a noble yet sweet appearance that inspired respect but also trust (how much he resembled her, without her knowing it; even his mother Margherita had the look of a noble woman in humble clothes). “Go!” she said to him. For every child born, God said to the mother, as the daughter of Pharaoh said to the mother of little Moses: “Take this child and raise him for me!” Children are not ours, they are God’s, and even more so is a child who has consecrated himself to His service. “Go!” she repeated with a lump in her throat, knowing she was handing him over to other mothers, to thousands of other souls, whom he would now nourish with the Bread of Heaven as she had nourished him as a child with her milk and the grain of her fields.

Tombolo, in the province of Padua, then had half the population it has today: fifteen hundred. They were robust and cheerful people, who spoke loudly and gesticulated a lot, due to their habit of haggling over livestock. "Good people," the parish priest, Don Antonio Costantini, told him, welcoming him with open arms. "Good people, once you've lost the habit of blasphemy."

The parish priest wasn't old, but he was very ill, and Don Giuseppe saw that he needed to get to work immediately. His fervor and sensitivity helped him quickly fit in with the environment, and he became cheerful: he played bocce with the village boys, beating them or being beaten according to his need for respect or consolation. He founded a night school and in exchange asked for a promise to stop blaspheming.

He preached, taught catechism, visited the sick, healed the healthy, broke

down superstitions, healed, and revived the parish, much to the consolation of Don Antonio, who jokingly called him his "perpetual motion."

One day, Don Giuseppe returned from a sermon in a nearby village. He had received a gold napoleon as compensation, and he bounced it in his hand, joyfully, thinking of the true gold of God's word. A poor man saw him, his eyes widened, and began to follow him. Don Giuseppe noticed and asked, "Do you want it?" The other man held out his hand, and Don Giuseppe returned home penniless, as always, with his soul freed from a burden.

He spoke well and was convincing, in his concise and innovative sermons, because he meditated on the law of love and lived it. He slept four or five hours a night, and will always be so. He spared everyone the work and took it upon himself, always cheerful, lively, and delightful.

Only when he was alone with his Lord did he prostrate himself on the ground and ask for strength, counsel, and fervor. They said he was humble because he came from the people, but being from the people isn't enough to be humble: he was humble because he knew the fragility of the human soul and trusted not in himself, but in God.

THE DOUBLE LITER OF GOOD WINE

Nine years later, the Tombolani suffered the same fate as their mother Margherita: they saw him taken away. He was taken away this time too by an order from the Bishop of Treviso, who appointed him parish priest of Salzano, a town of two thousand souls, near the Venetian lagoon, among the vegetables. In Tombolo, on the day of his

departure, no merchant made any deals, no house celebrated: there was sadness in everyone, even those who used to hang around outside the parish church. Don Giuseppe had his sisters Rosa and Anna go ahead to Salzano, who went to open, dust, and redecorate the old parish house. In Salzano, the very poor boy from Riese and chaplain of Tombolo found the provision of a horse and carriage: those farmers were not rich but generous and wanted their priest to travel by carriage. Salzano had never had such a young parish priest, and young people are usually given little trust, but Don Giuseppe had what it took: a soul experienced in love in an agile and obedient body. In church, he liked to talk about Saint Vincent de Paul, and while talking about him, he fell in love with him. One day, his sister Rosa put the pot on the table and searched for the boiled meat at the bottom with a spoon. She caught nothing and questioned her brother with her eyes: "There's a thief in the kitchen," she said, smiling. "Don't pay any attention," Don Giuseppe replied, and from that time on, Rosa paid no attention: the boiled meat ended up in the poor people's pot. In Tombolo, he had brought to the pawnshop two objects that had been given to him: his watch and a piece of silver cutlery. He said, in apology, "My poor are my gold and my silver." In Salzano, he pawned the parish ring, and as for the horse and carriage, he got rid of that wealth by lending it to those in need. One day, the horse was brought back to him half-ruined. He looked at it and, seeing the slightly mortified manager, simply said: "I see, I see, but unfortunately you've ruined it for me. Go ahead, go ahead!"

THE CITY STREETS

When the Archpriest furrowed his brow, it meant an important decision had to be made.
Sister Anna waited with quiet confidence.
"Follies," said Don Giuseppe, "must be remedied."

And he did not leave Salzano until he had paid back the very last cent of his debt. He left with a step less brisk than usual and with his normally upright frame slightly bent: after the nine years in Tombolo, he had spent another nine in Salzano as parish priest—*the father responsible for souls*, a fullness of love that never lets go. Those too had been nine years without rest and without limits.
Once, during the cholera outbreak, Sister Rosa, shaken by the state he was in, tried to impose some restraint on him:
"We must take care of our health as well!"
Don Giuseppe answered gruffly:
"Well done! To avoid cholera—with one 'l'—should I expose myself to the wrath of God—with two?"

The people of Salzano still pass that story down, and even today the children learn it from the lips of their parents.

He appeared in the cathedral of Treviso as Canon Monsignor Giuseppe Sarto on the first Sunday of Advent, November 28, 1875. Bishop Zinelli had found a laborer who cared nothing for the hours of work, and he spared him no tasks; he gave him two more offices, naming him Chancellor of the Diocese and Spiritual Director of the seminarians.

It was as if he carried the whole Diocese on his shoulders—from the administration of Church property to the more delicate care of the seminarians' souls—and

always among the people: people who came to the Curia with money quarrels, or to beg for money they did not have, and boys in the seminary like he once had been, with more dreams than coins to buy books and their little cassocks.

For eighteen years he had walked on dirt roads under sun and rain, bowing toward those in need—though, as he used to say, *it was a way of rising*. Now he walked on paved streets, but did not walk much: too many hours of the day had to be spent in the shadowed stillness of solemn rooms.

He felt nostalgia for the fields, together with the deep sense of humility that had only grown in him through the years. In the address he gave the seminarians as their spiritual director, he said: "You must accustom yourselves to hear the words of a poor country parish priest, and forgive him if they are not worthy of this place."

And all of them, one of the listeners later said, young and old, were enthralled. An elderly teacher, Monsignor Brevedan, declared:
"I have been in the seminary for fifty years and have known many good men—but none like Monsignor Sarto."

He was also known by old Nane, a servant in the seminary of Padua who loved him with a tender devotion. Monsignor Sarto was in Padua preaching the Thirteen Days of Saint Anthony and had asked Nane to wake him at three. Nane would not sleep until he heard the clock strike three and had knocked at the Monsignore's door. The two words he always heard—"Ready, thank you!"—rewarded all his effort.

But he never knew that most mornings Monsignor Sarto was already awake, and in order not to rob him of the joy and pride of waking him, he would blow out the lamp when he heard his steps in the corridor and pretend to wake at the knock of his knuckles.

He continued working twenty hours a day.
"I was born under this star," he would say cheerfully.

TWO RINGS

"His Excellency asks you to come down."
Monsignor Sarto raised his eyes from his Chancellor's desk, surprised.
"His Excellency?"

The new Bishop of Treviso, Monsignor Apollonio, was in the midst of pastoral visitation and seemed to have returned in haste; it was therefore likely that the matter was grave.

Indeed, he appeared mysterious when he said:
"Let us go to my chapel."
And once there, he asked him to kneel:
"Let us kneel, dear Monsignore, for we must both pray for something that concerns us."

After a moment he handed him a slip of paper: it was the papal appointment naming him Bishop of Mantua. Outside, the September air of that year 1881 was mild, and Monsignor Sarto had not yet turned fifty.

The country curate felt crushed by the sudden news and began to weep like a child. Then, recovering his spirit, he joked with Monsignor Apollonio—who was comforting him like a father:
"This was all that was missing!"
It all felt too much, and he let the Holy Father know, humbly yet insistently, that he wanted none of it.

But the Pope did not heed him and called him to Rome for consecration, which took place on November 16 in Saint Apollinaris. Later, that great Pope of the social encyclicals said in conversation:
“If the people of Mantua do not love him, it means they could love no Bishop.”

In Mantua things were not going well, and the Bishop is like a lighthouse in a storm: a light for castaways, yet struck unceasingly by the waves of heresy and hostility.

There was political distrust in the turbulent shaping of a united Italy, and winds of new philosophical theories blowing disorder among Catholics—disturbing, cooling, and misleading them.

Monsignor Sarto could be wholly absorbed in listening to a plea of need or the anguish of a restless soul, yet his mind perceived the deepest needs of the people, and his heart beat with the heart of Christ: while he prayed, he suffered with the Church for all human sorrows and failings.

He knew well what awaited him in Mantua—a province ravaged by materialism and atheism. Fatigue did not frighten him—it never had, nor ever would. What weighed him down was the conviction that he was incapable of carrying so grave a responsibility; and so he confided sweetly to his Lord in long, burning prayers that left him consoled.

He wrote to the Mayor of Mantua:
“I extend my hand to you, and declare that I shall be happy on the day I may fulfill, among those whom I am pleased to call fellow citizens and children, the office of father and friend… The new Bishop, poor in all but rich in heart, has no other aim than the salvation of souls and to make of all

one single family of friends and brothers."

And to the people of Mantua, in his first pastoral letter:
"I shall spare no care, no vigil, no labor, and nothing will be dearer to me than your welfare."
To ensure his words did not seem presumptuous, he added that he trusted not in himself, but in God's help:
"God denies nothing to those who trust in Him, and we can do as much as we hope; indeed, we can do all things if we hope all things."

Before becoming the beloved servant of the Mantuan people, he wished to visit his own: Tombolo, Salzano, Riese. It was a triumphal journey.

Before his mother, he became again the cheerful, affectionate son eager to honor the woman who had given him life and raised him to God.
"Look here, mamma," he said, offering her his hand, "my beautiful pastoral ring!"
The old mother did not answer immediately, too moved to speak. But when she could, she did not forget she was still a mother:
"It *is* beautiful, your ring, Giuseppe—but you would not have it if I had not had this one!"

THE PRIEST AND TOIL

Tombolo, Salzano, Riese: the journey was meant to end in Treviso, but once in Treviso Bishop Don Bepi—who had set out to bring the blossoming of a new springtime of faith into the mists of the lower Mantuan plain—did not have the courage to face a farewell so painful that he could not bear it.

He left a letter for the Rector of the Seminary:
"Read it in the refectory, when I am no longer there."
And at the first dawn of April 18th, heavy-hearted, he departed in secret.

The people of Mantua had come to meet him at the Verona station, and upon arriving in Mantua he realized that his reputation had preceded him. At the station he found a long line of carriages, and along the road two long rows of cheering people.

When the celebrations were over, he remained with his three sisters—Maria, Anna, and Rosa (who had obediently accepted the heavy yet beautiful mission of assisting the Bishop in the seclusion of his household)—and with his secretary, Monsignor Bressan.
The warm welcome had not elated him. The watchful eye of the good Shepherd had already perceived the desolation of the field entrusted to him. He smiled at his sisters as he dismissed them for the night and smiled at Monsignor Bressan: *"Thank you, my friends."*
That first night he did not sleep: dawn found him in prayer. After that night, the sleep of that sturdy but no longer young man was limited to what his will allowed: five hours, from midnight to five.

From five in the morning until midnight, the door of the episcopal palace remained open—except for the hours when the Bishop was not receiving visitors because he was out visiting them himself. It remained open, and anyone might cross its threshold, rich or poor ("He welcomes the rich kindly, and the poor even more kindly," the Mantuan folk said), reaching the Bishop without ceremony or bureaucratic barriers.
"May I come in?" one would ask—and no one answered, if the sisters were busy or away and Monsignor Bressan occupied with more pressing tasks. The visitor simply proceeded.

One morning, proceeding thus, did Monsignor Achille

Ratti himself—who had come from Milan to indulge his bibliographic passion in the Mantua library—walk in. "May I come in?" he asked, and suddenly found himself before the Bishop, who immediately stretched out his hand and asked if he had celebrated Mass.
"I celebrated in the cathedral," Ratti replied.
So Monsignor Sarto rose, and knowing his sisters were still at church, invited his visitor to follow him, informally, into the kitchen. The Bishop prepared the coffee himself, and they drank it together.

Monsignor Achille Ratti—by then Pope Pius XI—would later recall this episode when speaking of Monsignor Giuseppe Sarto, Pope Pius X.

In Mantua, as has been said, the affairs of faith were in dire condition. The Synod—the general assembly of the diocesan clergy to study, propose, and implement reforms and new laws concerning pastoral life and discipline—had not been held in Mantua for two centuries. One can imagine how, in two centuries without pruning, the tree of ecclesiastical discipline had grown wild and overgrown.

Monsignor Sarto was a gentle and humble man, but he was also a Bishop who had to defend the rights of God and of souls, and he displayed a courage that can only be called the courage of holiness.
He convened the diocesan Synod, which in September 1888 gathered two hundred priests in the cathedral for three days—priests who had entered with some reluctance and left renewed and renewing.

Its purpose was to respond to the needs of the Christian people—especially the true people of the humble (for it is not the destitute who form the true people, but the honest and hardworking

humble)—to revive parish life, to give soul to the teaching of doctrine to children and adults, to increase the frequency of the Sacraments, to strengthen and invigorate the seminary, to regulate liturgical chant, and to prevent every kind of distortion.
A colossal labor accomplished in three days under the gentle yet firm urging of the Bishop—a labor that required each attendee to put reforms into immediate practice.

He visited parish by parish, and nearly parishioner by parishioner: he descended into inhabited cellars and climbed up to lived-in attics. To those who could not keep pace with him and advised him to moderate his zeal, he replied:
"A priest is a man bound to toil; priest and toil are synonyms."

The enemies of faith felt defeated by such courage and generosity (he had remained poor and lived as a poor man). Some of his more timid and less trusting children wished to emigrate; he urged the parish priests to be brave, both in combating heresies and in preventing rash and ruinous departures:
"Truth begets hatred, but if it is always beautiful to render it due homage, it is all the more so in a matter so important, which concerns the salvation of souls."
He also had to contend with Crispi's anticlerical government, yet no one hindered his work—neither the government nor an unfortunate slanderer who had written against him and later, finding himself in need, was secretly aided by him through a third party so as not to embarrass him.

THE PATRIARCH'S FAMILY

Without his knowledge and despite the protests of his

troubled humility, the Bishop of Mantua underwent yet another of his periodic and painful uprootings: the Master of the Vineyard of souls, seeing the wisdom and capability of his work, moved him each time to broader and more varied fields.
The Master saw that the good laborer planted his heart in the vineyard, and it was precisely that heart—along with his intellect and his strength—that bore fruit; but the needs of that mystical vineyard which is the Church outweighed the needs of the heart, and so the uprooting took place.

Had the *"country curate turned bishop"* allowed himself to be seduced by titles, this time he might have felt overwhelmed with consolation: he received two in succession—the title of Eminence and that of Patriarch.
Leo XIII summoned him to Rome, where Monsignor Sarto, obedient and resigned to honors that weighed heavily upon him, arrived on June 7, 1893. The Pope said: *"I wish to make the Bishop of Mantua a Cardinal,"* and had to smile to comfort him. Notably, he made him a Cardinal before naming him Patriarch of Venice, to show that the honor was granted to his person as Bishop, not to the office of Patriarch.

Mantua celebrated him richly, though with the sorrow of parting. Cardinal Sarto had not lost his kindness; he joked with everyone, worked for the good of all, but spent more and more time in the chapel: greater responsibilities drove him to seek more insistently the pierced heart of Jesus.

He could not resist the pleas of friends, and before boarding the train for Venice (Crispi's government bore grudges against him and delayed granting the

exequatur for his spiritual possession of the Queen of the Adriatic), he visited both familiar places and unknown ones—for no town in the Veneto, and many in Lombardy, wished to forgo the honor of celebrating him.

At Cittadella the people of Tombolo stormed the train: *"Don Giuseppe! Don Giuseppe!"* and His Eminence smiled, moved by such old affection. At Castelfranco he found the entire town and half of Treviso; at Riese, finally, upon reaching the door of his home, he realized he was still dressed in his simple black attire, and before approaching the bed of his beloved, ailing mother, he wished to dress as a Cardinal—for her.
The old, simple, yet noble country seamstress embraced her son, Cardinal and Patriarch, and said, in a fading voice amid sweet tears:
"Give me your blessing. I am going ahead to wait for you in Paradise."

And so she did shortly after, at the age of eighty-six, on February 2, 1894.

The Patriarchal son sailed the Grand Canal for the first time in his gondola as shepherd of the beautiful city a few months later, on November 24, followed by a grand procession of gondolas, passing between two lines of festively adorned palaces—every one in celebration except that of the municipality and its occupants.

The Venetians, so sensitive to gentleness, received more than they expected. The Patriarch stopped to speak with gondoliers and fishermen as though one of them, speaking in dialect. Only when he was among children did he dress in full solemnity, and he excused himself:
"Poor little ones— they like the red!"

For the people he revived the art of lace-making in Burano; for those to whom he had said on his first day from the pulpit of St. Mark's:
"I have never seen you, yet I carry you all in my heart… I long for you, in loving me, to be able to say with sincerity of soul: our Patriarch is a man of upright intentions, tolerates no half-measures, holds high the unsullied banner of the Vicar of Christ, and seeks only to uphold and defend the truth and to do good."

For his children he opened his home and heart, his belongings and authority—finding work, providing food, securing families, spreading the peace of which he was herald and bearer. He stopped only when he had nothing more to give or to do—in other words, he never entirely stopped, for his great soul always found some means to bring forth help and comfort almost miraculously.

"Parish priests, clergy, magistrates, nobles, the wealthy, the children of the people, the poor—you are my family; you are my heart and my love."
There might be discord and resentment among the people—divisions of class and interest—but in the Patriarch's heart they were one family.
Into the heart of the Patriarch flowed all disagreements and all sorrows; and that heart was never sated, never rested until, along the canals, in the alleys, in the little squares, he found yet another sorrow to gather.

The clergy was tempted to bend with the wind and display a certain liberalism in worship and discipline—as had happened in Mantua—so as not to seem outdated.
Then the Patriarch pressed his thin lips and

admonished:
"You will be called papists, clericals, retrogrades, intransigent.
Be proud of it! Be strong!"

In 1898 he convened a solemn Eucharistic Congress to spread devotion to the Eucharist; he continued to wage an ever broader and more fervent battle for the Eucharist, against the abandonment of the Altar.
"Come to Mass, O parents, O employers: your example will greatly influence your children, your workers, the lower classes… and you will bring to society, through the well-being of families, the greatest benefits. Come to Mass, beloved Venetians!"

He cherished the seminary with tender love. He ascended Monte Grappa in 1901 to bless the *Madonnina d'Italia*; he blessed the first stone of the new bell tower of St. Mark's in 1903, after the collapse of the old one, and—responding to Minister Nasi, who had attacked not him but the truth—won the heart of the crowd.
He brought the young Maestro Perosi for the reform of liturgical chant, and the harmony of his soul won over everyone—municipality and authorities included.

THE TEARS OF THE ELECT

The Venetians lined the banks and the bridges from St. Mark's to the station.

Nine years had passed—always nine years!—since the first procession of gondolas toward St. Mark's, and now they feared they would see their beloved Patriarch Sarto pass by for the last time.

Leo XIII, the great Pope of the social Encyclicals, had died on July 20, and the opening of the Conclave was set for the 31st at eight in the evening, in the year 1903.

The Patriarch departed assuring his Venetians: *"Do*

not worry—alive or dead, I shall return!" But his secretary, Monsignor Bressan, was not so calm and had advised the Patriarch's sisters with prudent foresight: *"Prepare the luggage for a long journey."* When Don Giuseppe saw them, he protested: *"A journey to Rome is not, after all, a journey to America!"*

Yet that evening, the day before leaving, he sat sunk in heavy thoughts in a corner of the dining room. His elbows rested on his knees, his hands clasped in prayer. He said—as if speaking only to himself, with the deep anguish of a man about to face mortal danger: *"To think that in eight days one might be made Pope!"*

And indeed, eight days later, on the morning of August 4—the fifth day of the Conclave—he was elected Pope, as a rising swell of votes gathered around his name. Meanwhile, the country curate Don Giuseppe, shaken by the way the ballots were turning, went about imploring the Cardinals: *"Forget me, forget me!"*

On the evening of August 3, when the choice of the Holy Spirit was already all but certain, the young Archbishop and Secretary of the Conclave, Monsignor Raffaele Merry del Val, found him in the Pauline Chapel, prostrated in prayer, his face buried in his hands. Mons. Merry del Val knelt beside him and asked: *"Does Your Eminence persist in your refusal?"*

Cardinal Sarto lifted a face wet with tears and answered:
"Yes—do me this kindness!"

After the election, the next morning, he made one last attempt to refuse, in tears. Then he drank the bitter chalice: *"I accept—as a cross."*
"How do you wish to be

called?"
"Since I am to suffer, I take the name of those who suffered: I shall be called Pius."

That evening he was exhausted, yet he had to sign the letters to the Heads of State. And when Mons. Merry del Val took his leave, his task completed, the Pope looked at the young monsignor—whose noble simplicity had already won his affection—and asked: *"What! You too are leaving me? Am I to be alone, then? No—stay, for now."*

He had already named him Secretary of State in his heart, and together they were to walk a difficult yet radiant road.

The Pope of harmony requested that his apartments not be made "too fine"—that is, not too luxurious—and that there be no mirrors, no tapestries. As he withdrew to his room, weary beyond measure, he was disturbed by the rhythmic steps of the Swiss Guard in the corridor. The Pope opened the door and said: *"Go to sleep, my dear son; it is better for you—and you will let me sleep as well!"*

But he himself did not sleep that night—or many others afterward.
He brought his three sisters—Rosa, Maria, and Anna—and a niece to the Vatican, but he insisted their simple way of life remain unchanged. So that the splendour of the Vatican would not dazzle those humble women, he reminded them gently: *"We were born poor."* And they all remained poor, without titles, to the end of their lives.

The coronation took place on the morning of August 9. St. Peter's Basilica was filled beyond all imagining when Pope Pius X entered on the *sedia gestatoria*, heralded by silver trumpets.

The applause burst forth, spontaneous and thunderous, but the Holy Father placed a finger on his lips and murmured: *"It is not fitting to applaud the servant when the Master is present."*

The gesture did not diminish the applause; instead it swelled. And when His Holiness heard a cry in Venetian—*"Long live our Patriarch!"*—his heart was moved, and he smiled with joy upon his beloved children.

RENEWING ALL THINGS IN CHRIST

The world awaited the first words and actions of the new Pope—he who had risen into the light of day from the countryside of Riese and whom the will of God had raised to the supreme authority on earth: the humblest-born had become the most powerful. And the world awaited him at the supreme test, ready to exalt him or to condemn him, without mercy.

To the Pope's ears reached this anxious expectation, and he had it answered, with humility and quiet example:
"They ask what the Pope is doing? Tell them: the Pope is praying."

And it was prayer that dictated to him the program for governing the nation of all nations—the Catholic Church—expressed in his first encyclical of October 4, 1903: *"Instaurare omnia in Christo"—To restore all things in Christ.*

The gentle and affable Pius X showed himself able to stand with ambassadors as easily as with gondoliers, and his simplicity never put him in difficulty. His first encyclical revealed the gifts he had long kept hidden. *"Let us act as Pope!"* he once said to the new Cardinal Secretary of State, Merry del Val. And to act as

Pope means to act with the fullness of love and of authority.

With the clear and universal vision of the saints, and after having prayed—as he always prayed—to draw strength and security for the fulfilment of so grave and often sorrowful a duty, he saw that the nations were ripening for ruinous events. They were striving to build a society that could not stand, for its builders had rejected the cornerstone—Christ, the Lord of Peace and Truth.

The peoples exalted freedom and called themselves liberals, but it was a freedom choked by selfishness. They grew enthusiastic for social equality and called themselves socialists, but it was an equality imposed by violence, which respected neither the rights of the human person nor the natural diversity of needs—and thus frightening clashes and rebellions arose.

There was only one path to peace and progress: *Instaurare omnia in Christo*—to renew all things in Christ: the individual, the family, the parish, labor, the nation, society itself.

Not liberalism, not socialism, but Christianity, which is everything: freedom, social justice, a human society advanced and established in fruitful peace and universal well-being.

Christianity is at once liberal and socialist; it stands above and encompasses every economic and political conception that does not oppose it.

The son of a village laborer and of a country seamstress, now the Vicar of Christ, declared in this first document—better called a monument of loving wisdom—that he was *"unworthy of the honor of the Pontificate by reason of his own littleness."* Yet the Heart of Christ at once

made him worthy, dictating to him these lofty reflections that still apply to human society today.
"For who does not see that human society, more than in past ages, is now in the grip of a grave and deep disorder, which growing daily and corroding it to the core, draws it to ruin?"

From his lowliness, he raised his soul to God:
"Let us take courage in Him who comforts us; and setting ourselves to the work, upheld by the power of God, we proclaim that we have no program for Our Pontificate other than that of restoring all things in Christ, so that Christ may be all and in all."

The Vicar of Christ and Head of the Apostles turned to the Apostles—the bishops—the shepherds responsible for a scattered and rebellious flock. He asked them to help him in this work of renewal:

"The desire for peace lies deep in every heart… But to desire peace without God is an absurdity. Where God is absent, justice is exiled; and once justice is removed, the hope of peace is vain.
Many, driven by this thirst for peace—that is, for the tranquility of order—gather into societies and parties, calling themselves parties of order. Vain efforts! The only party of order that can restore peace in the present turmoil is the party of God… which can never be achieved except through Jesus Christ."

The path to Christ is the Church—*and only the Catholic Church; there is no other*—and therefore the Pope, the bishops, and the clergy.

The Pope desired that bishops renew parish life by forming holy priests—learned if needed, but above all holy:
"Our preference is and will remain for those who, while cultivating ecclesiastical and

literary learning, devote themselves more directly to the good of souls."

The heart of the great Pope was always near the people who worked and suffered, and he knew that the highest knowledge is that which the Holy Spirit infuses directly into the most generous priestly souls.

The bishops' first concern must be the seminaries and the religious instruction of the people, who blaspheme "more through ignorance than malice." He asked the clergy for charity, *"which, patient and kind, must extend even to those who oppose and persecute us… Who can take from us the hope that the flame of Christian charity may not dispel the darkness of their hearts and bring them the light and peace of God?"*

After bishops and clergy, the faithful were called to cooperate in the great restoration of the Kingdom of Christ: *"They will have for auxiliaries all the faithful… and may God, rich in mercy, graciously hasten this restoration of the human race in Jesus Christ."*

Arciprete Don Sarto had visited every family in his parish; Bishop Sarto had visited every parish in his diocese. Pope Pius X, through this first encyclical—guidepost to all his future work—announced his intention of visiting, though without leaving the voluntary prison of the Vatican, the entire Catholic Church, to renew it in Christ with the breadth of vision of his great soul.

In eleven years of pontificate, he issued three hundred and fifty encyclicals, *motu proprio*, and discourses, as well as three thousand three hundred and twenty-two decrees and documents. The whole life of the Church was stirred and strengthened by them; the whole world was

subdued by this gentle and intrepid Pope.

THE SINGER OF THE CENDROLE

The boy from Riese loved to listen to folk songs in the fields, and while working he himself accompanied his measured gestures with a song. But when he put down the hoe, cleaned himself up, put on his shoes and jacket, and went to the services at Our Lady of the Assumption of the Cendrole, he wanted those cheerful, carefree songs to remain outside the church: inside, they disturbed his prayer, which is recollection, and a composed, solemn music.

However, at that time profane music had invaded the churches and had boldly and brazenly mixed itself with sacred melodies, and good Bepi suffered because of it.

As a chaplain, as an archpriest, as a canon, as a bishop, as a patriarch, the child raised in the fields with a harmonious soul worked with all his strength—against the opposition of those who had grown accustomed to easy music (without realizing they were spoiling the fragrance of prayer)—to drive loud, inappropriate tunes out of the Lord's temple and restore the harmony of beautiful Gregorian chant.

In Pius X, despite the grave responsibilities of governing the Church, the harmonious child of Riese had not died. The harmony of his soul could even be read in his appearance: a French visitor, himself a lover of beautiful music, described him this way:
"He is gentle, tender, and melancholy. Beautiful dark-grey, deep eyes, a strong nose, a very white and beautiful hand, also strong; a lock of hair a bit short and raised. No photograph gives an idea of him… He passes

by blessing, giving his hand not only to be kissed but to shake—always serene, always a little sad, with a beautiful, silent, slow gait."

Doesn't it seem as though we can hear the notes of Gregorian chant? Pius X believed that religious chant is prayer, and that prayer is nourishment for action: he clearly saw the aspirations for justice and peace in all peoples and began his work for justice and peace by reforming liturgical chant.

"We will have wars," he said, foreseeing the resistance his reforming zeal would meet, as it had earlier in Venice—where he overcame it thanks to Monsignor Perosi, who ended up enchanting and captivating the Venetians. He consoled himself, as always, with hope placed in the Lord's help: "We will have wars, but in Rome we have had worse ones."

On November 22, 1903, the feast of Saint Cecilia, patroness of sacred music, the Pope signed the *Motu proprio on Sacred Music*, a courageous act of reform intended to eradicate every intrusion of irreverent and unsuitable songs, as well as every liturgical deviation in religious functions. It is also the document of a wise and practical man, seasoned by long experience in parish life.

"Nothing should take place in the temple that disturbs, or even diminishes, the piety and devotion of the faithful; nothing that might reasonably cause disgust or scandal; above all, nothing that directly offends the dignity and holiness of the sacred rites. Today our attention turns… to the abuses in matters of singing and music. Indeed, both because of the very nature of this art—unstable and ever-changing—and because of the progressive alteration of taste and habits, as well as the harmful influence that profane and theatrical

art exerts on sacred art, we believe it our first duty to raise our voice in reproval and condemnation of everything that is contrary to the right norm."

The Pope immediately provided instructions and rules so that art might be holy, genuine, and universal… and bear the inspiration and flavor of Gregorian melody.

The gentle Pius X wrote the strong document and awaited the reaction, which soon burst forth violently—but it broke against his unshakable determination to defend the rights of God and of "His House."

Today we enjoy in our churches the beautiful liturgical chant that consoles the soul of the people—the beautiful chant given to us by the harmonious and wise love of the Pope, the singer of the Cendrole.

After the reform of music, a reform of the liturgy was needed as well, for it too had become corrupted, and Pius X called the faithful to consider the Mass as the prayer of prayers, the center of piety and liturgy.

"When you attend Mass, do not recite other prayers; listen to the Mass, make the Mass your prayer, pray the Mass."

And today the faithful attend Mass with the missalette in hand, truly praying together with the priest, and this prayer of the Christian people is the most effective and consoling.

THE SOCIAL ACTION AND THE UNIVERSITY

The successor of Pope Leo XIII—who with the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* had shown the way to the Christian social school—did not forget the harsh living conditions of the people. He, himself a man of the people, felt the need to

rescue the humble classes, his dearest children, from the injustices of the rich and from the claws "of all those errors called socialism, communism: utopias… monstrosities that do not admit the fall of man… the existence of evil nor the necessity of its remedy; points of Catholic belief rejected by modern educators. From such refusals arise all the antisocial practices attempted before our very eyes… To admit Jesus Christ is to affirm original sin and Redemption… it is to easily understand the inexplicable mystery of the inequality of men on earth, an inequality necessary, inevitable, which would return the day after a generous dreamer believed he had abolished it… and it will always be difficult to bring near the first and the last, the rich and the poor, the great and the small, unless the Gospel and the Cross are placed between them: the Cross, the only Ark of the Covenant; the Gospel, the only peace treaty."

The Pope who, at seventy years of age and with youthful ardor, was already in prayer and at work long before sunrise and remained at prayer and labor long after sunset, striving to "restore all things in Christ," turned his attention to the *Opera dei Congressi*, an organization of Catholics which had strayed into politics and conflicts.

Courageously, thinking of the true interests of the people of the fields and the factories, he suppressed it; and on June 11, 1905, with the encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito*, he founded the Catholic Popular Union, intended to gather Catholics of all social classes—especially the great multitudes of the people—around a single center of doctrine, propaganda, and social organization.

It was Catholic Action, organized and directed toward that spiritual and social mission on behalf of the people which still makes it a Christian militia for the defense of truth, social progress, and active charity.

"It is supremely necessary," he says in the encyclical (continuing and completing his Padua discourse of 1896 on the Gospel and the Cross), "that the Popular Union seize the opportune moment, step forward courageously, and offer its own solution, making it prevail through firm, active, intelligent, disciplined propaganda, such as may directly oppose the adversaries' propaganda."

The idea of propaganda called to his mind that of culture. In Italian universities—after so much glory of faith (were they not born in the bosom of the Church?)—the Crucifix was taken down from the wall, and it was believed that by removing it they had suppressed it; they taught that faith obscured science.

Father Gemelli was in Rome for a congress; Pius X learned of it and summoned him: holiness has these luminous intuitions. He received him with open arms, had him speak of philosophy, and they came to an understanding about founding a new review (*The Review of Neo-Scholastic Philosophy*). Then the Pope opened a drawer of his desk and took out three thousand-lira notes: even as Pope, Giuseppe Sarto was not rich. "You friars would take everything from me!" he said with a smile.

And thus the seed of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart was planted in good soil.

THE MODERNISTS AND THE MODERN POPE

As soon as a child lowers himself to listen to instinct rather than to the good example and sound teaching of his parents, he excuses his deviation by accusing his parents of not being "modern."
But for certain people, being "modern" meant breaking the wise and loving restraints of Catholic doctrine and morality, and launching themselves down the slope of sensual desires and error.

Among the millions of spiritual children of Pius X—and especially among the more learned ones (always remember that knowledge without charity does not build but destroys, as Saint Paul wisely warns)—a craving arose to feel "modern" in relation to Christian doctrine and tradition.

These misguided innovators wanted to renew everything in the Church, but **not in Christ**, for some even went so far as to deny that He was the Son of God. They became so fervent in their illusion of modernity that they made it into a doctrine and gave it a name: **modernism**.

They were clever people, capable writers, and able to persuade those with less doctrine and less judgment. They wanted to modify the dogmas, even the Old and New Testaments, "modernizing" them; they wanted to give the Church the character of human societies, which survive only by adapting to the ever-changing whims of mankind. The danger was grave—indeed, gravest—for the error was spreading everywhere and creating unease, doubt, and uncertainty even in parish life.

Instaurare omnia in Christo—to restore all things in Christ—and yet the

modernists were destroying unity, doctrine, and even the authority of Christ in the Church. All works of God are tested by adversity and opposition, and the opposition of the modernists was powerful. But the **iron Pope** was more powerful still, and with the Encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis*, dated September 8, 1907, ninety-three pages of print, he revealed to even the well-intentioned the heresy of modernism and condemned it.

One day, at an audience, the Pope found himself face-to-face with an administrator of the city of Venice—one of those who had refused to decorate the town hall on his arrival and later became one of the fiercest opponents of the Patriarch, blocking with an almost impenetrable wall the petitions of the poor.
When the Pope saw him, he reacted with joy:
"Quick," he ordered the prelate accompanying him, "bring me the finest gold crown from the secret chest."

Then, taking the hands of his old adversary himself: "What a welcome visit! How is your mother? And how is Venice? You know, I have thought of you and of your mother. Take this gold crown to her and tell her that I bless her with all my heart, for the Pope has always loved your family."

The municipal administrator, overcome, burst into tears and cried aloud:
"Pope Sarto is a Saint!"

The holy Pope was not content merely to uproot the evil of modernism from the body of the Church; he wanted to give new vigor and splendor, in Christ, to all her members.
He wanted every priest to imitate his gesture toward every adversary; he wanted them to be holy, innocent, and without stain. He sensed that the world can be saved only by the

holiness of the Catholic clergy and the vitality of the parish—there are no other paths, absolutely none, neither social, political, nor scientific.
He wanted priests to have "the mind of Christ" and to love poverty, humility, and charity above all other virtues.

After much prayer, and pouring his great heart into his writing, he composed and, on August 4, 1908, published his wonderful *Exhortation to the Catholic Clergy*, which even today no priest or seminarian reads without emotion and edification.

But the clergy has always been—and perhaps always will be—insufficient for the great and grave needs of the Christian people: the harvest is plentiful, and the laborers are always too few.

To a pastor who asked him for help in building a larger church, Pius X asked whether he had, in his parish, anyone assisting him in the apostolate.
The pastor replied: "I am alone."
"It is more urgent," the Pope answered, "to build *lay apostles*. You can think of the larger church later."

He also wanted catechists for the missions—precious collaborators of the priestly work, apostles of the vanguard and penetration.

That same year as the Exhortation, the noble lady Maria Cristina Giustiniani Bandini presented him with a proposed statute for a "truly Catholic" women's movement.
Pius X lit up with joy:
"I like this program. Leave me these papers: if there is something to add, I will add it; if something must be removed, I will remove it. But I want to study them."

A few days later, he founded the **Union of Catholic Women of Italy**—which in every parish is a support and consolation, and often a

silent, patient, and courageous bridge between the pastor and distant, rebellious, or misguided souls; and nationally, one of the most effective forces for the moral and civil reconstruction of the Italian people.

THE SUPREME TRIAL

Colonel Repond, commander of the Swiss Guard, thought—as a good soldier—that some small cannons were necessary to give prestige to the Corps and meaning to the idea of defending the Vatican.
One day Pius X looked at those instruments of war for a long time and jokingly asked:
"What are they for?"
The colonel replied, half-astonished and half-proud:
"To fire them, Your Holiness!"
"To fire them?" the Pope exclaimed, alarmed. "Ah, no," he said firmly, in dialect, "*Mi no sbaro!*" ("I don't fire!").

He was nearly eighty when he sensed that war was near. The Pope who had labored his whole life for peace was crushed.
"Fortunate you," he said to the minister of Brazil who was taking leave, "for you will not see the great war up close!"
The minister was surprised, and deeply struck by those words, which the events of the time did not yet seem to justify.

But the great heart of the Pope had seen rightly: the war that would destroy churches and parishes, peoples and nations, that would bring hatred and slaughter into the fields of love and labor, and above all afflict the humble, was about to break out.
That great heart, which had loved and suffered so much, which had always managed to smile and always to hide anguish, was prostrated.

His last act was an "Exhortation to the Catholics of the Entire World," urging clergy and faithful to direct their supplications "to Him from whom alone help can come, to Christ, Prince of Peace and omnipotent Mediator before God." It was dated August 2, 1914.
In those very days the German armies invaded Belgium.

The intrepid "restorer of all things in Christ" was nearing the end of his mission with the vision of the Christian world devastated by war: the Heart of Jesus asked of him this supreme test of sorrow and faith.
An old father dying without being able to stop his children from killing one another; a reformer who, at the end of his long and industrious day, sees the world he built collapsing.

The old father received the visit of foreign seminarians who were leaving for their countries to serve in the military: they laid aside the one garment of mutual love and put on different uniforms—symbols of mutual death.
Holding back tears, he said to them:
"I would gladly give my life to avert this horrible scourge."
He said "life," to name the highest good, but he would have given a thousand lives, had he been able.

Instead, he died contemplating the clash of nations, which inevitably reverberated in his heart.
He had only a mild bronchitis, but the news of the outbreak of hostilities drained his heart of all strength; he worsened within days.
On the morning of August 18, he asked for Holy Communion as Viaticum.
"God's will be done," he said simply. "I believe that all is over."
He blessed everyone,

consoled with a wave of his hand when he could no longer speak, and held the hands of his faithful Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val.

He made the Sign of the Cross slowly. He appeared of angelic composure and sweetness; even the doctors, struck by the presence of the divine in that dying man, wrote of it in their bulletins.

Surely God was rewarding him, showing him that his generous seed was not destroyed by the war unleashed by human malice, but would sprout in the secret of consciences and bear marvelous fruit for generations to come: *instaurare omnia in Christo*, above all wars and all denials.
God was preparing for him the glory of the Saints and the salvation of countless sons and daughters, even future ones—for the fatherhood of the Saints never ends.

On the morning of the 19th, he was in agony; the next day he died gently.
Throughout the world—even the Protestant world—shops closed, posting signs: **"Closed for global mourning."**

God was preparing for him the glory of the Saints and the salvation of innumerable children.

Every nation on earth, though at war with one another, sent condolences to the Vatican.

And the Catholic people said:
"A saint has died. A saint has died!"

His will reads:
"Born poor, lived poor, and certain to die very poor, I am saddened not to be able to repay many who rendered me singular services—especially in Mantua, Venice, and Rome—and since I cannot

give them any sign of gratitude, I pray God to reward them with His choicest graces."

He begged that his sisters and relatives be left poor, as they indeed remained.
He did not want to be embalmed, out of reverence for the modesty due to the body—a reflection of the angelic purity of his soul.

For three days the people passed before his bier in tears, until his body was laid, on the evening of August 23, in a simple tomb in the Vatican grottoes.
And the people—indeed the peoples—have venerated him ever since, at the tomb that is daily thronged (so much so that a cross had to be placed on the floor of the Basilica to manage the overflow) and pray to him in Heaven.

THE ROAD TO RIESE

Jesus healed the sick and said: "You will do greater things than these."
The Christian people know by intuition that the power to heal and to do "greater things" is reserved for the saints. And when they are sure they have found a saint, they behave like the crowds of Palestine before Jesus:
"Let me see, let me hear, let these wounds heal, let my son recover, let me believe!"

Pius X already had a well-earned reputation as a healer before becoming Pope. There was no pilgrimage, no audience from which requests for miracles or special graces did not emerge—often they asked only for his blessing.
And Pius X healed bodies and healed souls, but he did not want it spoken of. He did not attribute that power to himself and would place a finger to his lips, inviting silence.
But who could keep silent? The healed spoke, and the newspapers wrote about it.
The Pope would joke kindly:

"They go about saying and printing that I have started doing miracles—as if I had nothing else to do!"

He had so much to do, but that too was part of his mission: it was also a renewing of souls in Christ.

His Cardinal Secretary of State had the joy of seeing the principal aspects of this wondrous "work" depicted in the splendid monument that he himself inaugurated, after directing its organization and construction for nine years, in Saint Peter's Basilica on June 28, 1923, in the presence of Pope Pius XI, the Pontifical Court, the Sacred College of Cardinals, the Diplomatic Corps, the chapters, congregations, religious orders, and representatives of the nobility and the people.

In Astorri's monument, Pius X is depicted rising from the throne, his arms raised to heaven, his face inspired and illuminated with gentle sadness, inviting all to *instaurare omnia in Christo*, while on the side panels and bronze door his powerful works are commemorated.

The Catholic world awaited with trepidation the centenary of the birth of that "burning flame of charity and dazzling brightness of sanctity," as Cardinal Pacelli—now Pope Pius XII—described him.

On June 2, 1935, exactly one hundred years after his birth, the Venetians came to Rome with their entire episcopate, and throughout the year the tomb of the holy Pope received an uninterrupted pilgrimage of faithful from every nation.

On September 15 of that year, the village of Riese could not contain all those who had come for the inauguration of the "Monument" and "Museum"—his humble birthplace transformed into a memorial and museum.

“Come to me, you who labor.”
These words of Jesus were written on the heart of Pius X, and everyone could read them. The people found them written even in the places he had lived, and the road to Riese had become the road of rest for the weary and consolation for the afflicted.
It became—and remains—a path of earthly pilgrimage toward the encounter with holiness and the glory of Heaven, the only source of true peace and security for the human heart.

THE BEATIFICATION

“An hour of glory descends upon us in this radiant evening. It is a glory that rests closely upon the Roman Pontificate, a glory that shines throughout the whole Church, a glory that enfolds, here beside us, the much-venerated tomb of a humble son of the people, whom God has chosen, enriched, and exalted.”

“For his person and for his work, God willed to prepare the Church for the new and arduous duties that the turbulent times ahead would reserve for her. To prepare in due season a Church united in doctrine, firm in discipline, effective in her shepherds; a generous laity, an instructed people, a youth sanctified from its earliest years, a Christian conscience alert to the problems of social life. If today the Church of God, far from retreating in the face of the forces bent on destroying spiritual values, suffers, fights, and — by divine power — advances and redeems, it is due in great part to the far-sighted action and sanctity of Pius X.

Today it appears manifest how his entire Pontificate was sublimely guided according to a design of love and redemption, to dispose hearts to confront our very battles, and to ensure ours and future victories.”

It is the afternoon of December 3rd, 1951, an unusually mild and luminous day. St. Peter's Square is a living sea of moved and expectant people. His Holiness Pius XII has spoken from the steps of the Basilica, before the incorrupt body of Pius X, surrounded by more than two hundred cardinals and bishops.
He has proclaimed Blessed the Pope of his youth, the Pope he had known, tenderly loved, and devotedly served.

"Now that the most meticulous examination has probed to the depths all the acts and vicissitudes of his Pontificate, now that the sequel of those events is fully known, no hesitation, no reservation is any longer possible; and one must acknowledge that even in the most difficult, harsh, and gravely responsible moments, Pius X, assisted by the great soul of his faithful Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val, gave proof of that enlightened prudence which never fails the saints, even when, in its applications, it finds itself in painful — yet inevitable — contrast with the deceptive postulates of human and purely earthly prudence."

The crowd is borne along by a joy that transports it into a delightful and unknown realm, its emotion revealed only by the sweetest tears before it breaks into applause: joys that God alone grants to the human heart, and that no earthly interest can produce.

The splendor of the ceremony is transfigured and magnified: it becomes divine power.

Present at the ceremony is one of the two women miraculously healed, who bore witness to the intercessory power of Pius X before the throne of God: Sister Benedetta De Maria, an Italian Poor Clare, whom the Divine Physician — at

the plea of Pius X — healed instantly and definitively on February 27th, 1938 of a malignant tumor, declared by earthly doctors to be the certain and inevitable cause of imminent death.

The second witness chosen in the Beatification process was another nun, Sister Maria Francesca Deperras of the Visitation of Dôle, in France. Here too the doctors had shaken their heads in helpless resignation before an osteosarcoma of the left femur, inoperable and incurable; they had sentenced her to death within a short time. Sister Maria Francesca had turned to Pius X, and the gentle Pope — who in life listened to all and in Paradise continues to listen to those who invoke him with steadfast faith — had laid her plea before the throne of his Lord Jesus, who did not accept the medical verdict and ordained the instantaneous, perfect, and definitive healing of the woman: in France the calendar then marked December 7th, 1928. And on the evening of June 3rd, 1951, all the bells of Rome pealed in celebration.

THE CANONIZATION

Television granted those who were not in St. Peter's Square on the evening of Saturday, May 29th, 1954, the advantage of beholding the vast flood of souls that had filled every free space, from the summit of the dome through the entire Via della Conciliazione and beyond, and of savoring the details of the ceremony. It could not, however, convey through the screen the depth of emotion felt by those present at the words of the Pope:

"We decree that Giuseppe Sarto is a Saint, and we enroll him in the canon of the saints, establishing that throughout the universal

Church his memory be celebrated with devout piety each year on the day of his birth into heaven."

Meanwhile, from the high loggia of St. Peter's was unveiled the tapestry painted by Luigi Greganti, portraying Pius X in the fullness of his majesty as Supreme Roman Pontiff.

An emotion that vibrated in the choir of the *Te Deum*, intoned by His Holiness Pius XII, taken up by forty-five cardinals and five hundred bishops in the single language of Rome — returned to the world with the Church as its head — repeated by the President of the Italian Republic, Einaudi, by Prime Minister Scelba, by ministers and official representatives of nations from every continent, by princes and nobles, and amplified over the city and the world by the people in the square, in the streets, along the Tiber, on the Janiculum Hill, in the neighborhoods, at the windows, on the balconies and rooftops, as far as the eye could see.

"Invincible champion of the Church and providential saint of our times," Pius XII once again called him, the sure interpreter of the needs of modern society, "which anxiously seeks a solution to restore to itself a soul."

In one of the tribunes sat the last of the miraculously healed, chosen to attest to the thaumaturgic power of the Saint:
the lawyer Francesco Belsani of Naples, cured of a gangrenous lung abscess in 1951, and the cloistered nun Maria Ludovica Scorcia of Palermo, who that same year was suddenly healed of an incurable meningoencephalitis.

The next day, Sunday, the remains of Saint Pius X were borne triumphantly through the streets of Rome to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major,

and the life of the capital paused: it saluted in the body carried by a cortege of cardinals, bishops, and thirty thousand men “the spirit of justice and of law” — the spirit each believer longs to see, with Pius XII, “penetrate the halls of the Conferences of the Nations,” in order “to assure the peoples a long and happy era of tranquility and peace.”

Each year, on August 20th, the universal Church will propose anew the gentle and steadfast laborer of Christ to the memory and as an example for the peoples who in Christ have chosen the way of progress and peace.

PRAYER

O **Saint Pius X**, good and vigilant Shepherd, now risen to the glory of the blessed, hear the prayer we lay at your feet.
Obtain for us the true love of Jesus, that we may live for Him alone!
Grant us your great devotion to the Holy Virgin!
Deliver us from every evil of soul and body!
And make the Church and Christian society, as you so greatly desired, sing the hymn of victory and peace!

PRAYER TAKEN FROM THE DISCOURSE OF THE HOLY FATHER ON ST. PIUS X

O Saint Pius X, glory of the priesthood, splendor and ornament of the Christian people; you in whom humility seemed to be joined with greatness, austerity with gentleness, simple piety with profound doctrine; you, Pontiff of the Eucharist and of the Catechism, of unblemished faith and fearless firmness: turn your gaze toward the holy Church, which you so loved and to which you dedicated the best of the treasures that, with generous hand, divine

Goodness had placed within your soul.
Obtain for her safety and steadfastness amid the difficulties and persecutions of our times;
support this poor humanity whose sorrows afflicted you so deeply that the pulses of your great heart finally ceased;
grant that in this troubled world there may triumph that peace which must be harmony among nations, fraternal accord and sincere cooperation among social classes, love and charity among men;
so that the anxieties that consumed your apostolic life may become, thanks to your intercession, a happy reality, to the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.