

1925

Rome, Villa Carpegna, 13-17 March, 1925
Preparation for my episcopal consecration

(1) I have not sought or desired this new ministry: the Lord has chosen me, making it so clear that it is his will that it would be a grave sin for me to refuse. So it will be for him to cover up my failings and supply my insufficiencies. This comforts me and gives me tranquillity and confidence.

(2) I am to be a Bishop: so there is no time to prepare myself; mine is a state of perfection already acquired (*acquisita*), not still to be acquired (*acquirenda*). 'It is the duty of Bishops', says St Thomas, 'to be perfect and teachers of perfection.'

This is a terrifying thought for me, for I feel and know myself to be very helpless and incapable! Another reason for remaining humble, very, very humble !

(3) The world has no longer any fascination for me. I want to be all and wholly for God, penetrated with his light, shining with love for God and the souls of men.

(4) I shall often read again Chapter IX, Book III of *The Imitation of Christ*, which says that 'all things are to be referred to God as their final end'. This has impressed me most profoundly in the solitude of these days. Indeed, in these few words there is really everything.

(5) In my new state my life of prayer must take on a new aspect. The words 'digne, attente, devote' must find expression in me and by me for the edification of souls.

(6) The intention and general programme of my life as a Bishop will be in accordance with the promise I shall make at my consecration, in the solemn and moving words of the Pontificale, that is:

'(a) To use prudence according to the meaning of Holy Scripture . . . and to teach the same (Scripture) to the people by word and example.

(b) Reverently to accept, teach and preserve the traditions of the Fathers and the constitutions of the Apostolic See.

(c) In all things to show fidelity, submission and obedience to the Blessed Apostle Peter and the Roman Pontiff:

(d) To preserve my actions from all evil and as far as I can, God helping me, to direct them to all good.

(e) To preserve and teach chastity and sobriety.

(f) Always to be engaged in the work of God and free from worldly affairs and the love of filthy lucre.

(g) To cherish humility and patience in myself, and teach these virtues to others.

(h) To treat with kindly charity the poor, pilgrims, and all who are in need, in the name of God."

These words will frequently be material for my examinations of conscience.

(7) The Bishop's robes will always remind me of the 'splendour of souls' which they signify, the Bishop's real glory. God forbid they should ever become a motive for vanity!

(8) Let any praise of my humble person be expressed in the words of the Pontificale only, 'constant in faith, pure in affection and sincere in my love of peace'. May my feet be 'swift to spread peace and the good things of God'. May my ministry be one of reconciliation 'in word and deeds', and my preaching 'not in the persuasive words of human wisdom but in the manifestation of the Spirit and power' and the authority conferred on me by the Church never used for my own glory-used not to break down but to build up.

I shall try to deserve as a Bishop also the praise that Holy Father Pius X told me was the finest that could be said about a Bishop's secretary: 'a faithful and prudent servant', and become indeed, as the Pontificale goes on to say in the prayer of aspiration: 'Let him be tireless in well-doing' (this is just what I need to be), 'fervent in spirit; let him hate pride; let him love humility and truth and never forsake them under the influence of flattery or fear. Let him not consider light to be darkness or darkness light: let him not call evil good or good evil. Let him learn from wise men and from fools, so that he may profit from all.'

(9) The Church is making me a Bishop in order to send me to Bulgaria, to fulfil there, as Apostolic Visitor, a mission of peace. Perhaps I shall find many difficulties awaiting me. With the Lord's help, I feel ready for everything. I do not seek, I do not desire, the glory of this world; I look forward to greater glory in heaven.

(10) Now, forever, I assume also the name of Joseph, one of the names given me at my baptism, in honour of the dear Patriarch who will always be my chief protector, after Jesus and Mary, and my model. My other special protectors will be St Francis Xavier, St Charles, St Francis de sales, the patron saints of Rome and Bergamo, and the Blessed Gregory Barbarigo.

(11) I insert in my coat of arms the words Oboedientia et pax (Obedience and Peace) which Cesare Baronius used to say every day, when he kissed the Apostle's foot in St Peter's. These words are in a way my own history and my life. O may they be the glorification of my humble name through the centuries!