

PASTORAL LETTER

*Of His Eminence Cardinal Logue, the Archbishops and Bishops of
Ireland, to the priests and people of Ireland*

To be read in all Churches and public oratories at the principal Masses on Sunday October 22, 1922.

DUBLIN

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Dear Rev. Father and Beloved Brethren :—

The present state of Ireland is a sorrow and a humiliation to its friends all over the world. To us, Irish Bishops, because of the moral and religious issues at stake, it is a source of the most painful anxiety.

Our country, that but yesterday was so glorious, is now a byword before the nations for a domestic strife, as disgraceful as it is criminal and suicidal. A section of the community, refusing to acknowledge the Government set up by the nation, have chosen to attack their own country as if she were a foreign Power. Forgetting, apparently, that a dead nation cannot be free, they have deliberately set out to make our Motherland, as far as they could, a heap of ruins.

They have wrecked Ireland from end to end, burning and destroying national property of enormous value, breaking roads, bridges and railways, seeking by an insensate blockade to starve the people, or bury them in social stagnation. They have caused more damage to Ireland in three months than could be laid to the charge of British rule in so many decades

They carry on what they call a war, but which, in the absence of any legitimate authority to justify it, is morally only a system of murder and assassination of the National forces—for it must not be forgotten that killing in an unjust war is as much murder before God as if there were no war. They ambush military lorries in the crowded streets, thereby killing and wounding not only the soldiers of the Nation, but peaceful citizens. They have, to our horror, shot bands of these troops on their way to Mass on Sunday; and set mine traps in the public roads, and blown to fragments some of the bravest Irishmen that ever lived.

Side by side with this woful [sic] destruction of life and property there is running a campaign of plunder, raiding banks and private houses, seizing the lands and property of others, burning mansions and country houses, destroying demesnes and slaying cattle.

But even worse and sadder than this physical ruin is the general demoralisation created by this unhappy revolt—demoralisation especially of the young, whose minds are being poisoned by false principles, and their young lives utterly spoiled by early association with cruelty, robbery, falsehood and crime.

Religion itself is not spared. We observe with deepest sorrow that a certain section is engaged in a campaign against the Bishops, whose pastoral office they would silence by calumny and intimidation and they have done the priesthood of Ireland, whose services and sacrifices for their country will be historic, the insult of suggesting a cabal amongst them to browbeat their Bishops and revolt against their authority.

And, in spite of all this sin and crime, they claim to be good Catholics, and demand at the hands of the Church her most sacred privileges, like the Sacraments, reserved for worthy members alone. When we think of what these young men were only a few months ago, so many of them generous, kindhearted and good, and see them now involved in this network of crime, our hearts are filled with bitterest anguish.

It is almost inconceivable how decent Irish boys could degenerate so tragically, and reconcile such a mass of criminality with their duties to God and to Ireland. The strain on our country for the last few years will account for much of it. Vanity, and perhaps self-conceit, may have blinded some who think that they, and not the nation, must dictate the national policy. Greed for land, love of loot and anarchy have affected others, and they, we regret to say, are not a few. But the main cause of this demoralisation is to be found in false notions on social morality.

The long struggle of centuries against foreign rule and misrule has weakened respect for civil authority in the national conscience. This is a great misfortune, a great drawback and a great peril for a young Government. For no nation can live where the civic sense of obedience to authority and law is not firmly and religiously maintained. And if Ireland is ever to realise anything but a miserable record of anarchy, all classes of her citizens must cultivate respect for and obedience to the Government set up by the nation, whatever shape it takes, while acting within the law of God.

This defect is now being cruelly exploited for ruin, as we see, of Ireland. The claim is now made that a minority are entitled, when they think it right to take up arms and destroy the National Government. Last April, foreseeing the danger, we raised our voices in the most solemn manner against this disruptive and immoral principle. We pointed out to our young the conscientious difficulties in which it would involve them, and warned them against it. Disregard in men of the Divine Law then laid down by the Bishops is the chief cause of all our present sorrows and calamities.

We now again authoritatively renew that teaching; and warn our Catholic people that and they are conscientiously bound to abide by it, subject, of course, to appeal to the Holy See.

No one is justified in rebelling against the legitimate Government, whatever it is, set up by the nation and acting within its rights. The opposite doctrine is false, contrary to Christian morals, and opposed to the constant teaching of the Church. "Let every soul," says St. Paul, "be subject to the higher powers"—that is, to the legitimate authority of the State. From St. Paul downwards the Church has inculcated obedience to authority as a divine duty as well as a social necessity; and has reprobated unauthorised rebellion as sinful in itself and destructive of social stability: as it manifestly is. For if one section of the community has that right, so have other sections the same right, until we end in general anarchy. No one can evade this teaching in our present case by asserting that the legitimate authority in Ireland just now is not the Dail or Provisional Government. That Government has been elected by the nation, and is supported by the vast majority of public opinion, There is no other Government, and cannot be, outside the body of the people. A Republic without popular recognition behind it is a contradiction in terms.

Such being the divine Law, the guerilla warfare now being carried on by the Irregulars is without moral sanction ; and therefore the killing of National soldiers in the course of it is murder before God ; the seizing of public or private property is robbery ; the breaking of roads, bridges, and railways is criminal destruction ; the invasion of homes and the molestation of

citizens a grievous crime. All those who, in contravention of this teaching, participate in such crimes, are guilty of the gravest sins, and may not be absolved in Confession, nor admitted to Holy Communion, if they purpose to persevere in such evil courses.

It is said that there are some priests who approve of this Irregular insurrection. If there be any such, they are false to their sacred office, and are guilty of the gravest scandal, and will not be allowed to retain the faculties they hold from us. Furthermore we, each for his own diocese, hereby forbid, under pain of suspension, *ipso facto*, reserved to the Ordinary, any priest to advocate or encourage this revolt, publicly or privately.

Our people will observe that in all this there is no question of mere politics, but of what is morally right or wrong according to the divine Law, in certain principles and in a certain series of acts, whether carried out for political purposes or otherwise. What we condemn is the armed campaign now being carried on against the Government set up by the nation. If any section in the community have a grievance, or disapprove of the National Government, they have the elections to fall back upon, and such constitutional action as is recognised by God and civilised society. If their political views are founded on wisdom they will succeed sooner or later ; but one thing is certain the Hand of Providence will not be forced nor their cause advanced by irreligion and crime.

It may perhaps be said that in this our teaching we wound the strong feelings of many of our people. That we know, and the thought is an agony to us. But we must teach the Truth in this grave crisis, no matter what the consequences. It is not for want of sympathy with any part of our flock that we interfere, but from a deep and painful sense of our duty to God, to our people, and out of true charity to the young men themselves specially concerned. Let it not be said that this our teaching is due to political bias, and a desire to help one political party. If that were true we were unworthy of our sacred office. Our religion, in such a supposition, were a mockery and a sham. We issue this Pastoral Letter under the gravest sense of our responsibility, mindful of the charge laid upon us by our Divine Master to preach His doctrine and safeguard His sacred rule of faith and morals at any cost. We must, in the words of St. Peter, "Obey God rather than men."

With all earnestness we appeal to the leaders of this saddest revolt to rise above their own feelings, to remember the claims of God and the sufferings of the people on their conscience, and to abandon methods which they now know, beyond the shadow of doubt, are un-Catholic and immoral, and look to the realisation of their ideals along lines sanctioned by Divine Law and the usages of well-ordered society. Let them not think that we are insensible to their feelings. We think of them with compassion, carrying as they do on their shoulders the heavy responsibility for what is now happening in Ireland. Once more we beg and implore the young men of this movement, in the name of God, to return to their innocent homes and make, if necessary, the big sacrifice of their own feelings for the common good. And surely it is no humiliation, having done their best, to abide by the verdict of Ireland.

We know that some of them are troubled and held back by the oath they took. A lawful oath is indeed a sacred bond between God and man; but no oath can bind any man to carry on a warfare against his own country in circumstances forbidden by the law of God. It would be an offence to God and to the very nature of an oath to say so.

We, therefore, hope and pray that they will take advantage of the Government's present offer, and make peace with their own country, a peace which will bring both happiness and honour to themselves and joy to Ireland generally, and to the friends of Ireland all over the world.

In this lamentable upheaval the moral sense of the people has, we fear, been badly shaken. We lead with horror of the many murders recorded in the Press. With feelings of shame we observe that when country houses and public buildings were destroyed, the furniture and other fittings were seized and carried away by people in the neighbourhood. We remind them that all such property

belongs in justice to the original owners, and now must be preserved for and restored to them by those who hold it.

We desire to impress on the people the duty of supporting the national Government, whatever it is, to set their faces resolutely against disorder, to pay their taxes, rents, and annuities, and to assist the Government in every possible way to restore order and establish peace. Unless they learn to do so they can have no Government, and if they have no Government they can have no nation.

As human effort is fruitless without God's blessing, we exhort our priests and people to continue the prayers already ordered, and we direct that the remaining October devotions be offered up for peace. We also direct that a Novena to the Irish Saints, for the same end, be said in all public churches and oratories, and in semi-public oratories, to begin on the 28th of October and end on November the 5th, in preparation for the Feast of all the Irish Saints. These Novena devotions, in addition to the Rosary and Benediction, may include a special prayer for Ireland and the Litany of the Irish Saints.

✠ Michael Cardinal Logue , Archbishop of Armagh.

✠ Edward, Archbishop of Dublin .

✠ John, Archbishop of Cashel.

✠ Thomas, Archbishop of Tuam.

✠ Patrick , Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh.

✠ Abraham, Bishop of Ossory.

✠ Robert, Bishop of Cloyne.

✠ Joseph, Bishop of Ardagh.

✠ Patrick, Bishop of Kildare.

✠ Denis, Bishop of Ross.

✠ Thomas, Bishop of Galway.

✠ Michael, Bishop of Killaloe.

✠ Laurence , Bishop of Meath.

✠ Charles , Bishop of Derry.

✠ Patrick , Bishop of Clogher.

✠ Patrick , Bishop of Kilmore.

✠ Patrick , Bishop of Achonry.

✠ James, Bishop of Killala.

✠ Bernard , Bishop of Elphin.

✠ Daniel, Bishop of Cork.

✠ Joseph, Bishop of Down and Connor.

✠ Bernard , Bishop of Waterford.

✠ Edward , Bishop of Dromore.

✠ Charles , Bishop of Kerry.

✠ William , Bishop of Ferns.

✠ Denis , Bishop of Limerick.

✠ Thomas, Bishop of Clonfert.

✠ James, Coadjutor Bishop of Ossory,