St. Anthony Mary Claret

PASTORAL EXHORTATION ON THE JUBILEE OF 1855

Exhortación pastoral

From the Spanish of the first printing (Santiago de Cuba, 1855)

English translation

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About this translation

Translated from the *Exhortación pastoral* given at Puerto Príncipe on 25 January 1855 (Santiago de Cuba: Casañas, 1855). The translation is complete.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

Pastoral Exhortation on the Jubilee of 1855

Pastoral Exhortation which the Most Excellent and Most Illustrious Lord Don Antonio María Claret y Clará, Archbishop of Cuba, Primate of the Indies, addresses to his diocesans on the occasion of the plenary Indulgence in the form of a jubilee granted to the faithful of the whole Catholic world by our Most Holy Father Pius IX, Pope, on the first day of August 1854.

Casañas Printing House, Santiago de Cuba, 1855.

WE, DON ANTONIO MARÍA CLARET Y CLARÁ, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Archbishop of Cuba, Primate of the Indies, Prelate Grand Cross of the Royal American Order of Isabella the Catholic, of His Majesty’s Council, etc.

To the venerable Dean and Chapter of our Holy Primatial Church, to the Vicars, Parish Priests, clergy and faithful of our Diocese, health, peace and blessing in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The evils of every kind that afflict men today, and most especially the Christian people, could not fail to touch the tender heart of the common Father of the faithful, our Most Holy Pope Pius IX, whom the divine mercy chose to be its Vicar on earth in these so sad and calamitous days. Famines, plagues, earthquakes, wars and seditions, and, what is worse, a complete forgetfulness of God and contempt for His holy Law: these are powerful reasons for him to raise his voice in warning, to groan disconsolate at seeing his flock surrounded by so many dangers, to call us all to prayer and penance, and to open the treasures of the Church, offering them freely and generously to the faithful people who acknowledge him as Father.

The Church, beloved brethren, sees herself harshly assailed by all her enemies; the hand of God lets fall the arm of His indignation upon unbelieving men; just and sinners alike suffer the blow. Let the just pray, let sinners be converted, and the divine justice will be appeased. Let us all unite in intention with our most loving Father, and make ready to profit by the inestimable gift of the plenary Indulgence in the form of a jubilee which he offers us in his recent encyclical. Hear the tender words in which he pours out his religious feelings:

> *To the venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops and other Ordinaries who are in grace and communion with the Holy Apostolic See.*
>
> *PIUS IX, POPE.*
>
> *Venerable Brethren, health and Apostolic blessing. As We contemplate the whole Catholic world with the solicitude and affection of Our apostolic love, We can scarcely express in words, Venerable Brethren, the deep grief that afflicts Us at seeing Christian and civil society pitiably overturned, oppressed and laid waste by lamentable calamities of every kind.*
>
> *You know very well how afflicted and shaken the peoples of Christendom are by cruel wars, by internal discords, by pestilential diseases, by frightful earthquakes, or by other most grave calamities. But what is most painful among so many evils and misfortunes is that the children of darkness, more skilful and more united among themselves than the children of light, making use of their diabolical deceits, their arts and machinations, strive to wage cruel war upon the Catholic Church and her saving doctrines; to undermine and destroy the authority of every legitimate power; to deprave and corrupt the mind and heart of all; to spread everywhere the deadly poison of indifferentism and unbelief; to confound all rights, divine and human; to stir up and foster dissensions, discords and the movements of impious rebellion; to approve every crime, even the most cruel and detestable;*

and to leave no means untried to wipe our most holy Religion from the earth, were it possible for them, and to destroy even human society itself.

In the midst, then, of so many misfortunes, knowing very well that God, in His infinite mercy, has left us in Prayer an effective means of obtaining every good we need and of warding off the evils we suffer, We do not forget to lift up Our eyes to the holy and lofty mountain whence We hope for all help; nor do We cease to ask and beseech, with humble heart and fervent prayer, the God who is rich in mercy, that, banishing wars to the ends of the world and cutting off all discord, He may grant peace, concord and tranquillity to Christian princes and to their peoples; that He may especially instil in those same princes a devout concern to defend and spread ever more widely the Catholic faith and doctrine, in which the happiness of peoples chiefly consists; that He may free those princes and their peoples from all the evils that afflict them and grant them every true prosperity; and that He may liberally bestow the gifts of heavenly grace on all who are in error, so that, leaving the way of perdition, they may return to the path of truth and justice and be converted to God Himself with a sincere heart. And although We have already ordered that prayers be raised to Heaven in this Our city of Rome to implore the divine mercy, nevertheless, following in the footsteps of Our illustrious predecessors, We have resolved to have recourse also to your prayers and to those of the whole Church.

Therefore, Venerable Brethren, We address these present letters to you, earnestly entreating your outstanding piety to rouse with all zeal and effectiveness the faithful committed to your care to lay down the burden of their sins by true penance, and to seek to appease the wrath of God, provoked by the crimes of men, by means of prayers, fasts, alms and other works of piety. Set forth to the faithful, with your enlightened religion and wisdom, how merciful God is to those who call upon Him, and how powerful prayer is if, closing our ears to the enemy of our salvation, we have recourse to the Lord. Prayer, according to St. John Chrysostom, is the fountain, root and mother of innumerable goods; the power of prayer quenched the power of fire, curbed the fury of lions, put an end to wars, calmed battles, drove away tempests, put demons to flight, opened the gates of Heaven, broke the chains of death, banished diseases, repelled harms, made threatened cities firm, and turned aside, in short, plagues sent from Heaven, the snares of men and every sort of calamity.[1] We desire, however, with vehemence, Venerable Brethren, that, as you raise your fervent prayers for the aforesaid causes to the most clement Father of mercies, you do not cease to beseech the same heavenly Father with humility and ardent longing, and in union with your faithful, according to the contents of Our encyclical Letter addressed to you from Gaeta on 2 February 1849, that He may deign to enlighten Us propitiously with the light of the Holy Spirit, so that We may define as soon as possible, concerning the Conception of the Most Holy Mother of God and Immaculate Virgin Mary, whatever may conduce to the greater glory of God and the praise of that same Virgin, the most loving Mother of us all.

We had indeed already decided, in order that the faithful entrusted to you might pray with more ardent charity and more abundant fruit, to make known and distribute the treasures of the heavenly gifts whose dispensing the Most High has entrusted to Us. For this reason, trusting in the mercy of Almighty God and in the authority of His blessed Apostles Saints Peter and Paul, by that power of binding and loosing which the Lord, though We are unworthy, has committed to Us, We give and grant by these letters a plenary indulgence of all their sins in the form of a Jubilee, which may also be applied by way of suffrage to the souls in Purgatory, to each and every one of the faithful of both sexes of your dioceses who, within a space of three months appointed by each of you and counted from the day you shall fix, shall humbly and with sincere repentance confess their sins and, having obtained sacramental absolution, shall reverently receive the Holy Eucharist; and who, devoutly visiting either three churches designated by you, or one of them three times, shall pray there devoutly for some time according to Our intention for the exaltation and prosperity of Holy Mother Church and the Apostolic See, for the extirpation of heresies, for peace and concord among Christian princes, and for the peace and unity of the people of Christ; fasting, moreover, once within the said period, and distributing some alms among the poor according to each one's piety. And so that this indulgence may be gained by nuns, or other persons who live for life in cloisters, or who are hindered by some bodily infirmity or other obstacle preventing them from performing any of the said acts, We give Confessors the faculty to commute it into some other work of piety, or to defer it to another time close at hand, and even to dispense from Communion children who have not yet been admitted to their first. For this purpose We give you power, on this occasion and only during the said space of three months, to confer by Our apostolic authority on the confessors of your dioceses all the same faculties that We conferred in another jubilee granted by Our encyclical letters of 21 November 1851, addressed to you in print and beginning Ex aliis nostris, always excepting, however, those which in those same letters were excepted by Us. Further, We empower you to grant to the faithful of your diocese, lay as well as ecclesiastical, secular and

regular, and of whatever institute, even one requiring to be specially named, the faculty of choosing for this purpose a confessor, a secular or regular priest from among those approved, and of passing on that same faculty to nuns, even those exempt from the jurisdiction of the ordinary, and also to the other women who live in cloisters.

Act, then, Venerable Brethren, as men called to share in Our solicitude, and as watchmen set upon the walls of Jerusalem. Cease not to pray day and night with Us, and to make supplication with humility and with thanksgiving, crying fervently to God Our Lord and imploring His divine mercy, that He may propitiously turn away the scourge of His wrath, which we deserve for our sins, and pour out upon all the riches of His goodness. We certainly do not doubt that you will satisfy these Our desires and requests in the fullest manner; and We hold it for certain that especially all clerics, religious, nuns and other secular faithful who, living devoutly in Christ, walk worthily of the vocation to which they have been called, will without ceasing direct their humble prayers to God with an ardent love of charity.

And so that the Almighty, to whom We have recourse, may more readily incline His ears to Our supplications, let us not fail, Venerable Brethren, to ask the help of those who, already crowned, have won the palm; and first and perpetually let us invoke the ever Immaculate Virgin Mary, who is the greatest and most powerful intercession with God, and Mother of grace and mercy; and then let us seek the patronage of the Apostles Saints Peter and Paul and of all the Saints of heaven who reign there with Jesus Christ. But let nothing be more important or take precedence for you than to exhort, admonish and rouse assiduously and with redoubled effort the faithful committed to your care, that they may stand every day more steadfast and firm in the profession of the Catholic religion, carefully avoid the snares, deceits and evil arts of wicked men, walk with careful foot in the path of God's commandments, and diligently abstain from sins, from which all evils for the human race flow. Therefore never cease to kindle, above all with temperance, the zeal of parish priests, so that, carrying out their own office carefully and religiously, they may never fail to imbue and instruct diligently the Christian people \[plebe\] entrusted to them in the holy rudiments and precepts of our divine faith, administering the Holy Sacraments to them and exhorting all with sound doctrine. Receive finally, as a pledge of all heavenly gifts and a testimony of Our ardent affection for you, the apostolic blessing which We give lovingly and from the depths of Our heart to you yourselves, Venerable Brethren, and to all the faithful, clergy and laity, entrusted to your vigilance.

Given at Rome on 1 August 1854, in the ninth year of Our Pontificate. PIUS IX, POPE.

Thus far the words of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. In them you see clearly the two great evils of society which he deplores from the depths of his soul, indifferentism and unbelief, and which he seeks to ward off by means that hell cannot resist: prayer, fasting and penance. Which of you, beloved brethren, will turn a deaf ear to these words full of zeal, piety and charity? Who will not hasten to put into practice all that he deigns to forewarn us of? We say it with full confidence: no one will excuse himself. We say so because We know your religious spirit, of which you give Us proofs every day; because you understand from your own experience how much unity in faith and charity is worth, and you prize nothing so much as those divine gifts that make Cuba a truly Catholic people; and because nothing would grieve you so much as to see yourselves infected with that plague which in the family breaks the bond of love, in society loosens the tie of mutual duties, in law codes blots out and destroys the foundation of justice, in the individual extinguishes every feeling of charity, and in the conscience kills remorse. Let us all join to exorcize \[*conjuremos*: both "conjure away" and "join in oath against"\] these monsters, and ask the Lord to make them vanish from the earth and to preserve us, as up to now, from their deadly contagion.

United, as is our duty, with our common Father, sharing his very desires and obeying his holy dispositions, We announce and publish in our diocese the Jubilee, which all of us can gain \[*lucrar*, the technical Spanish verb for gaining an indulgence\] by putting into practice what he deigns to establish in his encyclical. And since he leaves to our prudence the choice of the day from which the three months of its duration are to run, We think it fitting to fix it on 1 March, continuing until the end of next May. Thus there is included in it the holiest time for Christians, Lent and Easter, and the month in which the sincere devotees of the Most Holy Virgin offer her daily, with the pure affections of their heart, the flowers of every virtue. What season could be more suitable for faithful who, like all of us, pride themselves so much on their love for the Son and for

the Mother?

The exercises you must perform within the three months to gain the Indulgence are the following. 1. To confess and receive Communion once with the due dispositions. 2. To visit once each of these churches: in Santiago de Cuba, the cathedral, the parish church of Los Dolores and the Church of San Francisco; in Puerto Príncipe, the principal parish church, La Soledad de la Virgen and Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes; in Bayamo, the principal parish church, San Juan Evangelista and San Francisco; in Holguín, the principal parish church twice and that of San José once. In all other parishes the parish's own church shall be visited three times. 3. One fast. 4. To give an alms to the poor or, if this is impossible, to say the Our Father and the Hail Mary five times in memory of the five wounds of our Divine Redeemer, praying in everything for the intention of the Supreme Pontiff. Although confession and communion are indispensable requirements, confessors may dispense children who have not yet made their first.

The visit may be made in two ways: in a body, or privately. Since the first way is so effective and gives such good example, We exhort you, beloved brethren, to prefer it to the second whenever circumstances allow. And to make the prayer as uniform as possible, We shall indicate the manner that seems to Us fitting in each of the two cases. When the visits are made in a body, the three may be made one after another in this form. If they are clerics, they shall go singing the Greater Litanies, breaking off at each station and reciting in ferial tone and kneeling: at the first, the Psalm *Domine ne in furore tuo*, the first of the penitential psalms, with the prayer *Deus qui culpa offenderis*; at the second, the Psalm *Miserere*, the fourth of the penitential psalms, and the same prayer; and at the third, when the Litanies are finished, the Psalm *De profundis*, the sixth of the penitential psalms, and afterwards the preces and prayers that belong to them, adding at each station the prayer of the titular Saint of the church and the *Pro remissione peccatorum*, and at the last the collect *Et famulos*, ending with the *Salve* and the prayer of the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

Lay people who accompany the ecclesiastical bodies may join in the Church's chant or go along praying the Holy Rosary, and at each station say five times the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be, praying for the ends His Holiness had in granting the Jubilee. Congregations and confraternities may follow either of the two methods indicated; and the rest of the faithful, whether or not they belong to congregations, who do not attend the public act but prefer to make the visits privately, shall pause at each church for a short time in prayer and end it with the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be repeated five times, uniting their intention in everything with that of the Supreme Pontiff.

Professed nuns and novices, and other persons who keep enclosure, shall visit their own church or chapel on three different days in the same form as the ecclesiastical bodies, beginning with the act of contrition, then the litanies through the cloisters, and concluding the preces and prayers in the choir itself.

As for prisoners, detainees, the sick and others lawfully impeded, their parish priests or confessors shall assign them, according to their prudence, an exercise equivalent to the visits.

The fast binds everyone in general, whether under 21 years of age or over 60, and only those prevented by a just cause, in the judgement of the parish priests, are excepted; the parish priests shall commute it into another pious work. On these fasts eggs and milk foods may be used by those who have no special prohibition by the rule of their institute or any other of whatever kind; but abstinence from meat binds, even for those who hold the Bull of the apostolic indult \[*Bula*, the Bull of the Crusade (*Bula de la Santa Cruzada*), which in Spanish lands relaxed the ordinary laws of fast and abstinence\], which does not cover extraordinary fasts such as the present one. All the exercises prescribed for gaining the Indulgence must be performed, according to a declaration of Benedict XIV, within one week.

Come, all of you, my brethren, to the foot of the altars; profit by these benefits and persevere always in the practice of the Catholic Religion which, by the Lord's grace, you profess. Those two pestilent evils, for whose extermination we are going to direct our prayers to the Lord, are expressly opposed to it. If unbelief

and indifferentism have wrought such havoc, this has been the sad fruit of the spread of bad books and of writings full of errors, which make men not wise but vicious. The enemy uses them to sow cockle in the field of the Gospel.[2] It falls to Us to watch without rest and to prevent by every possible means that in this part of the inheritance of the great householder \[*gran padre de familias*, the "householder" of Mt 13:27\] any other seed of doctrine should be poured out and scattered than that contained in good books, whose reading We can never recommend to you enough.

The Catholic religion is not the enemy of enlightenment \[*ilustración*: both "education" and "the Enlightenment"\], as her adversaries maliciously proclaim. A loving Mother, solicitous for the good of her children, she wants them learned and virtuous; and for that reason in every age she has set up establishments of free instruction, universities, colleges and seminaries, publishing and distributing books of solid and sound knowledge: knowledge that does not puff up but nourishes; that does not lull to sleep but awakens; that does not gather in on itself except the better to communicate itself; that does not freeze the heart but sets it on fire; that does not deify matter but exalts the spirit; that does not shrink the soul but enlarges it until it touches heaven; that sets no limits to its desires but plunges it into a space without end, into eternity. She teaches the soul to seek God outside itself, outside the wretched world that surrounds it; and man finds Him, draws Him, captivates Him and keeps Him in his heart.

The wise of the earth, with no other guide than their meagre intelligence, which by itself is insufficient to discover the whole truth, especially in matters of religion, make a show today of believing nothing but what that intelligence forges for itself or imagines it understands. They laugh at religious practices as at vain childishness, and even dare to dispute God's existence outside their own reason. The result of these ravings, taught as the great triumph of the present age, is the exaltation of the individual above the species and the setting aside of charity, whose very name offends the new masters of error. Like weapons must be used to fight them and to defend the truth: if poison is drunk in bad books, the antidote must be given in good books. As light dispels darkness, so instruction founded on faith, enlightening the intelligence, also dispels the clouds of unbelief and purifies morals. Good books serve for all this, and in particular they preserve from indifference; for it is a principle known to all that nothing is loved that is not first known: *Nihil volitum quin praecognitum* \[nothing is willed unless it is first known\]. The will is a blind power that loves no object unless the intelligence proposes it as worthy. Once the understanding has been instructed about nature, about the works of the Creator, about the divine attributes and perfections, indifference is as impossible to the will as it is for a bullet driven by powder with fury and thunder to keep its inertia. Indifference is the daughter of ignorance and of vice, which dwell in the heart of worldly people, of earthly men, who live attached to perishable things, pity those who more wisely despise them and seek their true treasure in heaven, and make them the target of their mockery and scorn. A terrible weapon is this, beloved brethren, more terrible even than indifference itself: the fear that some have of biting satire, of ridicule and contempt. Do not let their empty clamour frighten you; do not be like timid little birds that the rustle of leaves stirred by a light breeze frightens and drives from the nest, abandoning their young at the risk of losing them. Do not abandon, no, out of mere human respect \[*respetos humanos*: fear of what others will think\], or, what am I saying, out of trifling gossip, your religious practices, your respect and submission to the Church, your wariness of any other novelty in these matters. If impiety roars near you, give it no hearing; resist the temptation at once, profiting by the teaching your divine Master and Redeemer gave you in the desert.[3] The least condescension, merely listening to it, is for impiety the beginning of victory. If they slander you, if they put a bad construction on your good works and intentions, do not even try to find out what they say about you. The good must always have enemies; so it has been since the world began. Cain killed Abel because he was good; the martyrs suffered death for loving Jesus; the vicious always persecute the virtuous; and St. Paul says flatly that whoever wishes to live piously in Jesus Christ must of necessity suffer much.[4] Our divine Master promises beatitude, the kingdom of heaven, to those who are persecuted and afflicted for practising virtue.[5] God Our Lord permits it so, that the good may be purified of self-love, vanity and the other sins and defects

that assail virtue when it is praised and applauded. Those praises and applause cease when it is seen to be persecuted; freed from the temptation, it remains alone and wholly clean of defect. As the wind cleans the grain of chaff, so persecution purifies virtue. Blessed is he who remains faithful in the midst of temptation, says St. James: his brow will be crowned with the crown of glory that God prepares for those who love Him.[6] Courage, beloved brethren, valour and fortitude, which consist, according to a prophet, in silence and hope: *in silentio et spe erit fortitudo vestra* \[in silence and in hope shall your strength be\].[7] Keep the sacred deposit of the faith in the depths of your heart, and confess it without blushing; for if you are ashamed of being Christians, when Jesus Christ comes to judge you He will be ashamed of you and will not recognize you as His flock.

If you need to be on your guard against false doctrines, listen to Us, whom the Holy Spirit has placed to teach the world the way of truth and life. Take into your hands, not those corrupt books which, as We deplore with our Most Holy Father Pius IX, tear faith from hearts and put unbelief and indifference in its place, but so many others approved by the Church, which today are spreading among the faithful and among all who sincerely love the truth. A good repertory of these, in every form and for every class of person, is already offered by the Librería Religiosa, so recommended by the prelates and so favoured by the Spanish Catholic people. It may well be asserted that in Catholic Spain no other enterprise of this kind has won so complete an acceptance. Tireless in their holy undertaking of combating error and defending truth, its publishers go on publishing most useful works, ancient and modern, Spanish and foreign, rendering a real service to the cause of Religion. Of some of them We have acquired many thousands of copies, which We have distributed free among you and put into the hands of all who could not obtain them for themselves; and We shall continue, God willing, to spend, as up to now, a part of our income on this spiritual alms, from which you draw so much fruit, as We observe on our pastoral visitations.

The world of minds lives on doctrines; these doctrines sooner or later show themselves in deeds, giving shape to society and making it move according to their inspiration. This is the reason why the Spanish prelates, today more than ever, promote on their part the spread of good books, enriching them with the treasure of the indulgences they grant to those who acquire and read them. They know from history that the most speculative questions of theology and philosophy are always laden with order or disorder, with life or death; hence their eagerness to prohibit bad books and to recommend and urge the reading of good ones. Make use of these last, beloved brethren, and they will serve as a shield for your faith against the darts continually shot at you by the enemies of Religion. With their reading, with prayer, fasting and almsgiving, you will be on your guard, and no one will deceive you with philosophies and vain sophisms, as St. Paul warned the Colossians;[8] you will walk with firm foot along the slippery passage of this world, guided by the light that truth sheds; you will steer clear of the two terrible reefs which our Most Holy Father charges us to avoid today more than ever, unbelief and indifferentism; and you will happily reach the promised homeland. In testimony that this is our desire, and of the love We bear you, receive the pastoral blessing which We give you from the depths of our soul, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Given at Puerto Príncipe, on 25 January 1855.

ANTONIO MARÍA, Archbishop of Cuba.

By command of His Most Illustrious and Reverend Excellency the Archbishop, my Lord, Paladio Currius, Priest, Pro-Secretary.

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[1] St. John Chrysostom, Homily 15, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, against the Anomoeans.

[2] Cf. Mt 13:25.

[3] Cf. Mt 4:1–11.

[4] 2 Tim 3:12.

[5] Cf. Mt 5:11.

[6] Jas 1:12.

[7] Is 30:15.

[8] Col 2:8.