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"EXSUL FAMILIA"

and the functions of Catholic Organizations

EXSUL FAMILIA AND THE FUNCTIONS OF CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS

The theme, which the goodness and the wisdom of the eminent organizers of this Catholic international Congress for Emigration has kindly assigned to me, affords me an excellent opportunity to examine and, at the same time, pinpoint together with the esteemed members of the Congress the functions of Catholic bodies in assisting emigrants according to the Apostolic Constitution "Exsul Familiae".

This discussion, it seems to me, will help to illustrate and integrate the general theme of the Congress - the tasks and function of Catholic organizations in the sphere of emigration.

Of course, nothing Catholic can be ever exempt from the general and particular laws by which the Church intends to control directly and indirectly according to circumstances, the activity of the bodies which work not only in her name and with her mandate, but also those which the simple approval of her hierarchical authority.

Now it is well known to all that a collection of ecclesiastical statutes on this topic of emigration is contained in the Apostolic Constitution "Exsul Familiae".

To what extent, direct or indirect, do these statutes affect Catholic institutions for any kind of emigration so that one might claim that "Exsul Familiae" is the immediate supervisor of all their activity?

Divine Master has figuratively described as the light which illumines and the salt which preserves from corruption; advice in doubt, instruction against ignorance, warnings about sin, comfort in affliction; in other words, the spiritual works of mercy. Hence there is a complex scale of assistance to the emigrant, which passes from the spiritual to the moral and material and vice-versa, of which the Church is not ignorant. Frequently, one is the complement of, or the preparation for, the other.

Instruction is more easily successful with, and acceptable to, those who know little about and have an insignificant love of Jesus Christ and His gospel, when preceded by practical evidence in keeping with the advice of the Apostole, - "Be ye doers of the word" - James 1,22.

"Exsul Familia", therefore, though aiming at establishing clear rules, particularly in the second section, by the confirmation of what has already gradually emanated from the Supreme Legislator, or the introduction of new ones, thereby securing a more satisfactory form of spiritual assistance for the emigrant, cannot and does not overlook either the moral or material welfare of the emigrant. In support of this, it is idle to refer to the rich documentation contained in the text and in the very copious notes of the first section of this valuable Pontifical document.

However, we must candidly admit that the legal provisions of "Exsul Familia" look principally, almost exclusively, to spiritual welfare. The very titles of the greater part of the chapters indicate that much. The first deals with the competence of the S. Consistorial Congregation, the third with the missionaries to emigrants, chaplains on board ship, and the respective directors; the fourth with the care of souls which each bishop must have for the emigrant in his diocese; the fifth with the spiritual care which the bishops of Italy and of other countries must have for their emigrants; the sixth with the Pontifical College of priests for Italian emigrants. No explicit mention has been made of chapter two, and we shall soon see the reason.

There are many Catholic organizations which have as their specific purpose, the moral and material help of emigrants: some are international, others are national; some diocesan others parochial.

Now we ask the following questions: Are all these organizations envisaged by "Exsul Familia"? What arrangements does it make in their regard?

Assuredly, it will be interesting to bring out what relations they have with the S. Consistorial Congregation to whom Pius X, in his Motu Proprio "Cum omnes Catholicos" of August 15th, 1912, gave

this charge which has been confirmed by the present Supreme Pontiff, namely, to investigate and arrange all that can contribute to the better spiritual well-being of the emigrants of the Latin rite.

Is not the reply to these question difficult?

We must immediately make it clear that the answer^s though in general agreement, will have particular differences according as the organization is international or national, diocesan or parochial.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The very nature of the Church implies that an International Catholic Body cannot exist and operate as such except by the will of the Pope, to whom Divine Providence has given all authority in the world.

In fact, the jurisdiction which each single bishop enjoys is limited to the diocese entrusted to him by the Supreme Pastor, and no other authority intervenes between the Roman Pontiff and the bishop, not even that of the whole episcopal body. It is evident, therefore, that the canonical establishment of an international Catholic Organization for emigration must be directly subject to the Holy See. Indeed, the legal act which gave birth to the International Catholic Commission for Emigration with headquarters

at Geneva was founded by a letter despatched from the Secretariate of State to the President, Mr. James J. Norris.

Such international bodies - the same may be said of the national bodies, such as the Italian Catholic Commission for Emigration - established or approved by the Holy See, will evidently act according to the statutes of the constitution received from or approved by the supreme ecclesiastical authority.

Does this mean that they have no contact with "Exsul Familiae"?

The direct and immediate dependence upon a department of the Holy See, other than the S. Consistorial Congregation certainly does not prevent at least a friendly understanding with the organs of that Sacred Congregation, indeed more, a voluntary collaboration. This is evidently required despite the difference of function, because of the identity of source, whence their mission springs, identity of purpose in the mind of the Supreme Ruler, identity of common law observance. This has and is taking place at the present time.

To give an example: it is a pleasure to record the constant cooperation given by the International Catholic Committee for Emigration and the Italian

Catholic Committee in the annual celebration of "Emigration Day". Similarly, both the Bulletin and the Migration Digest of the International Catholic Commission for Emigration as well as the Bulletin of the Italian Catholic Commission have been, one might say, in rivalry over the publication of the statutes of the S. Consistorial Congregation about the assistance to emigrants and sailors, and over the publicity given to relevant studies on these topics.

However, we can, I believe, go further. Consequently, I must appeal to the second chapter of the second section of "Exsul Familiae", which has been held back purposely until now. It bears the title: Concerning the Delegate for the activities of emigration. It is worth while reading Article 10 of the chapter quoted, where the legislator indicates the general responsibilities of this office set up by "Exsul Familiae".

Art.10 par.1. "The function of the Delegate will be to look after and foster by every appropriate method, the interests, particularly the spiritual well-being of the faithful who emigrate, whatever their race, language or nationality may be and, with due reserve, whatever their rite may be, handling where necessary the business either with our Secretariate of State or with civil authorities and institutions".

Congregation, will assist by action and advice all Catholic associations, international or national, diocesan or parochial, interested in the welfare of the emigrant.

This office of which mention has been made has no true jurisdiction over these bodies. It is rather a liaison introduced by the Legislator between the Holy See, which is primarily concerned with the spiritual well-being of the migrant and all other Catholic activity in the field of emigration. This liaison will afford information and foster understanding, sometimes it will give direct cooperation, at others it will coordinate activity without in any way belittling the autonomy of the individual movements and without interfering with their immediate dependence upon other departments of the Holy See.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

A survey must now be made of the national institutions created by the bishops of the different nations.

"Exsul Familia", in the passage on "Episcopal Commission for Emigration", makes the following points:

Art.6. par. 1. "By Our authoritative approval of the special episcopal committees or commissions which have been set up by various European and American nations, and in the hope that this welcome initiative will be followed by other nations, We decree that the priests appointed by the bishops and secretaries of the aforementioned commissions may be nominated by the S. Consistorial Congregation, each for his own nation, directors of emigration work."

Art.7. par. 3. "Those priests who, in their own nation or district, have either the office of secretary of the aforementioned episcopal commissions for foreigners, or chosen by the bishops, are entrusted with such functions can become part of the Supreme Council for Emigration".

In other words, then, "Exsul Familia" has not only given its utmost recognition to the national movements already in being, such as the German Catholic Mission for Foreigners, the National Work of Assistance to Emigrants in Poland, the Episcopal Commission for Foreigners in France, the Department of Immigration attached to the N.C.W.C. for the United States, the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee for Australia, etc., but has also urged the episcopate for each nation to set up similar committee and commissions.

To give a few examples of organizations set up by the Episcopate as a consequence of "Exsul Familiae": the Argentine has the Episcopal Commission for Immigration and the Catholic Argentinian Commission for Immigration; Columbia, the Catholic Committee for Immigration; the Philippines has attached to the Catholic Welfare Organization, the Episcopal Committee for Emigration; Japan has the Episcopal Commission and the Catholic National Committee for Emigration; Mexico has the Episcopal Commission; Portugal, the Episcopal Commission, the Dominican Republic, a Central Secretariate for Coordination of Emigration; Spain, the Episcopal Commission for Migration and the Catholic Commission for Emigration; Uruguay, the Uruguayan Catholic Institute for Immigration; Venezuela, the Venezuelan National Catholic Commission for Migration.

Furthermore, while always mindful of the respect due to the authority of the Bishops in the territory allotted to each of them by the Supreme Pastor, "Exsul Familiae" has shown itself anxious to support the noble work being done for emigrants. For this reason the Secretary of each Episcopal Committee or Commission has been appointed National Director for the work of emigration and has been elected to a place on the Supreme Council for emigrant welfare as set up by "Exsul Familiae" at the S. Consistorial Congregation.

Obviously, this Supreme Council for emigration which will meet for the first time at Rome from the 29th of next September until the 4th of October has not and indeed cannot have any authority over the bishops; it will, however, be of great assistance in bringing about mutual understanding, in fostering unity of purpose, in coordinating the common effort and it will also help in the exchange of information and the drafting of directives, etc. By this opportune contribution, "Exsul Familia" has greatly assisted in controlling and strengthening the national organizations established by the bishops for the welfare of the emigrant; the further extension of this work will depend largely on the prudent and wise planning of the members of the Council.

At this point I would like to suggest a practical matter for the consideration of the delegates at this third International Catholic Congress for emigrant welfare. The study of the general theme of the Congress which will later be developed by the individual working groups endeavours not merely to publicize what has already been achieved by Catholic organizations, but specially to strengthen future international activities, to coordinate work in the field of education and emigrant settlement and to consider the problems of

organization and finance. The Supreme Council for emigrant welfare which has been established by "Exsul Familiae" is eminently suited for this work, because it consists of members who have had great experience in these problems and are, therefore, able to speak with authority on the difficulties of emigration and immigration in the respective countries.

DIOCESAN AND PAROCHIAL ORGANIZATIONS.

At this stage the address becomes a trifle more easy: although at first sight "Exsul Familiae" in Chapter 5 seems to deal only with Italy, because it is entitled "The spiritual assistance to be given by the bishops of Italy to emigrants", in fact it deals also with these organizations among all nations. Indeed the last article of the Constitution, n. 56, recommends to the bishops of all nations the directives given to Italian Ordinaries on emigrant welfare. "Finally in other places and countries outside Italy, where possibly there is no suitable assistance of a spiritual kind for Catholic emigrants, it will undoubtedly be of great practical value, if the bishops will apply the latest instructions concerning Italian emigrants, adapting them to local needs, as published in the legal Acts of the Roman Pontiffs and approved by Us."

The special points mentioned in Chapter 5 are as

follows: the establishment of committees and sub-committees and endowments for emigrant welfare by bishops, priests and those members of the laity who are distinguished for their Christian bounty and goodness. These committees and endowments would work, not just for the religious, but also for the moral and social welfare of all emigrants, particularly those of the artisan or manual labouring classes. "Exsul Familiae" recommends that such committees should be set up under the supervision of the Ordinaries and makes some suggestions about their composition: among the first to be enlisted are the members of Catholic Action, then the associates of other Catholic movements mentioned, though not exclusively, in the directives which this S. Consistorial Congregation has successively dispatched to the individual diocese of Italy.

In these documents mention is made of various branches of Catholic Action, namely A.C.L.I., C.I.F., ONARMO, P.O.A., O.D.A., The Young Girl's Protection Society, the Saint Vincent de Paul Conferences.

These diocesan and parochial organizations, with due regard for the authority of the Ordinary, would be headed by the National Director for emigration.

All such organizations should be established within the existing ecclesiastical framework, which because of its long experience and its natural adaptability is ideally suited for keeping in touch with every emigrant.

Thus it would be easy to furnish each emigrant with a church membership card, as desired by Pius XI, which would serve to introduce him to his new parish and to make him known to any local Church authority.

In this way, also, it should be possible to keep in touch with the emigrant at the moment of departure from his native parish and at the port of embarkation, to maintain contact with him during his voyage and from the moment of his arrival until such time as he has finally settled into his new surroundings. If we reflect on all this, and especially, if we remember that the organization has a National Director in every country who in turn is a member of the Supreme Council for Emigration, we shall begin to realize and appreciate the foresight and wisdom of the Church in establishing this institution for emigrant welfare.

It is true that the representatives of the Bishops come from countries that are widely separated, but through the work of the Supreme Council it will be easier to reach agreement as to the best means of putting into effect the Church's directives on emigrant welfare. This will also help to publicize to the faithful, who differ in language, race, and nationality, the teaching of Pius XII whose wise and profound teaching on emigration problems is rich with profitable lessons for all nations, both for those whose children are compelled to emigrate

and for those who find themselves in the happier position of being able to give hospitality to those who require it.

This enlight^ened doctrine has been the inspiration of the farseeing activity of the International Catholic Commission for Migration and in this Third Congress aims at reaching an even more profound knowledge of the problems and achieving a more thorough application of the principles contained in the Papal teaching on this matter.

Thus moved by a burning charity, you have come once more to consider and plan how Catholics can best contribute to the solution of the grave and urgent problems arising from the over-population of certain countries and you may rest assured that your labours and deliberations will make progress under the unerring and enlight^ened leadership of Pius XII.