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Title: Leo XIII., the Great Leader

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Release date: October 11, 2011 [EBook #37709]

Most recently updated: January 8, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Michael Gray, Diocese of San Jose

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LEO XIII, THE GREAT LEADER

By Rev. A. P. Doyle, C.S.P.

Written in August 1903, in *The Catholic World*, a monthly magazine, on the occasion of the death of Pope Leo XIII.



My course I've run of ninety lengthening years. From Thee the gift. Crown them with endless bliss. O hearken to Thy Leo's prayers and tears, Lest useless they should prove, O grant him this.

Leo XIII.'s Message to the Twentieth Century:

The greatest misfortune is never to have known Jesus Christ. Christ is the fountain-head of all good. Mankind can no more be saved without His power than it can be redeemed without His mercy.

When Jesus Christ is absent human reason fails, being bereft of its chief protection and light: and the very end is lost sight of for which, under God's providence, human society has been built up.

To reject Dogma is simply to deny Christianity. It is evident that they whose intellects reject the yoke of Christ are obstinately striving against God. Having shaken off God's authority, they are by no means freer, for they will fall beneath some human sway.

God alone is life. All other beings partake of life, but they are not life. Christ, from all eternity and by His very nature, is "the Life," just as He is "the Truth," because He is God of God. If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth (John xv. 6).

Once remove all impediments and allow the spirit of Christ to revive and grow in a nation, and that nation shall be healed.

The world has heard enough of the so-called "rights of man." Let it hear something of the rights of God.

The common welfare urgently demands a return to Him from whom we should never have gone astray: to Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life,--and this on the part not only of individuals but of society as a whole.

LEO XIII., THE GREAT LEADER.

BY REV. A. P. DOYLE.

THE aged Pontiff breathed his last at 4 P. M. on July 20. Because he had lived for over ninety years, and not for any other immediate reason, the end came. Though there was an apparent dissolution of his body under the devastating hand of time, still the mind is as keen and the heart as full of zeal, and the spirit as eager for work, as though the years of his glorious pontificate were before him.

During the last fortnight the gaze of all the world has been eagerly fixed on the death-bed of the expiring Pope, and under the white light of the public gaze he has loomed up, the great man he is, in all his gigantic proportions. The world saw the corporal feebleness of age and the ravaging hand of disease, but it saw also the conquering and unconquered spirit of the greatest man of his age—the noblest Roman of them all.

It is not time as yet to write his eulogy. We are too near the massive proportions of a great life to give a proper estimate of its greatness. It will be necessary to stand off from it at some distance in order to get the proper perspective. Still there are, however, some things that have impressed the world, and from these we cannot get away.

During these days of his mortal sickness, when the struggle with the grim monster became the keenest, Leo never is anything but the Christian gentleman. Men of dominating minds and inflexible wills, especially if they have been accustomed to rule, are sometimes thoughtless of others who are about them. They have been so accustomed to brush away obstacles that the directness and force of their determination seem to know no fear or favor in dealing with things that surround them. Leo never forgets the chivalry of Christian gentleness. When the cardinals come in to see him, though he is as near prostrate in body as he may be, still he rises from his bed to meet them, and asks them to be seated. When Dr. Lapponi asks to be relieved for a short while to visit the sick bed of his daughter, Leo apologizes for the trouble he is giving to every one around him, and says that they have all become martyrs for his sake. When one of the Vatican pigeons lights on his window-sill and gently taps at the window, he awakes out of his weakness and asks that the window be raised and the bird admitted, and he feeds the pigeon as it lights on his bed, gently stroking its feathers. When every one is anticipating his speedy dissolution, he rises from his bed, goes over to his writing desk, and puts into poetry some beautiful thought that fills his mind. And in the midst of all his suffering he is full of devotion. He prays incessantly to

the Mother of God. St. Leo's day comes, and ever since his childhood he has not failed to be present at Holy Mass on that day particularly; he directs that Mass be said in the adjoining room, and he devoutly follows it. He was a member of the Third Order of Franciscans, and in order to receive all the wonderful privileges that are granted to the faithful who are identified with that Third Order, he sends for the Capuchin cardinal to give him the last blessing. His faith is strong and tender. In the visions that pass before his mind the joys of paradise are vividly depicted. He would stay to give his last breath for the Church, but the alluring vision of heaven beckons him away. And in the midst of it all nothing can quench his unconquerable desire for work. There are some things that are unfinished; he calls Cardinal Rampolla and directs their execution. The Biblical Commission is very close to his heart, and he gives an admonition to his secretary that its work be prosecuted to a speedy end. These and many other little touches of character coming from the death chamber do not fail to paint the portrait of one of the greatest Popes the world has ever known.

Leo has been a providential man in the fullest sense of the word. He has been a Moses who has led the hosts of the Lord from a captivity that was more galling than the slavery of Egypt of old through the desert of suffering into the promised land. The forty years that have elapsed since the breach of Porta Pia have brought untold victories to the church. The Robber King battering at the gates of Rome is readily offset in the eyes of discerning readers by the eager visits of the Kaiser, the head of the Lutheran Church, and the English King, the head of the Episcopal Church, to pay reverence and homage to the head of the great Mother Church of Christendom, and everywhere throughout the world, people who are outside the fold have been devoutly praying that he might be spared to the world for many years to come. One cannot help contrasting the feelings of non-Catholic people to-day towards the Church of Rome with the sentiments of antagonism that were expressed but a generation ago. Not a little of this is due to the commanding, and at the same time attractive, figure of the great White Shepherd of Christendom. There have been popes who have emphasized certain characteristics, and they stand out in history as striking types of these special characteristics. Innocent III. was a great reformer; Sixtus V. a great statesman; Pius V. was crowned with the aureole of sanctity; Gregory VI. was a man of great learning; but Leo seems to have united in his own person in a very marked degree all these great qualities. His gifts were of so universal a nature that it is difficult to say which one belongs to him in the more pre-eminent degree. His genius has illuminated every department of religious activity, be it statecraft or be it letters; be it the devotional side of the church, or the philosophical, or the diplomatic, or the purely religious.

As a statesman he has rallied to the support of the church the influences of the great civil powers. When he began his pontifical career England was the enemy of the Papacy; Germany was persecuting the Catholics of the Empire; the United States of America had established no definite relations with the Holy See; while Spain, and France, and Austria, Catholic at heart, were too much worried over internal difficulties to be the earnest supporters of the Papacy that they should be. After twenty-five years there is no stronger friend of the dying Pope than the Emperor of Germany. The antagonisms that were openly enunciated in the German Empire against Catholics have been replaced by expressions of fealty. The Emperor has come to look upon the moral power of the Papacy as one of the most potent supporters of the throne. Leo has so stood for the authority of constituted governments, and the Catholic religion has had such influence in inculcating reverence and submission among the people, that were there no force of this nature, it would be necessary to create one in order that its work may be done. In Germany the people to-day are about equally divided between the Catholics as loyal supporters of the throne and the socialists, who, if their programme were carried out in its entirety, would sweep the throne away and abolish the authority that it stands for. In England the same is true, though perhaps not to as large an extent as it is elsewhere. In Spain Leo has upheld the throne that was tottering to a disastrous fall. If it were not for his influence, Spain would to-day be in the grasp of the revolution or broken up into a number of smaller states.

In the United States the devotion of twelve million Catholics has done not a little to cement together the stones of our social fabric by infusing the spirit of religion into the educational life of the country, and by standing for the permanency of the family and the integrity of the home.

Here is a sheaf of victories in the diplomatic world that would make any man's life a blessing to the world. Of course it is a profound pity that more has not been done in France. That it has not been done is no fault of Leo's. If his advice had been taken, and if the Catholics of France had rallied to the support of the existing government, it may well be supposed that the present deplorable condition of religious affairs would not have come to pass. Instead of witnessing the religious orders persecuted by an infidel government, there would probably have been a change of heart in the civil authorities, and as of yore France would be the eldest daughter of the church. The same may be said in Italy. The Italian people are more loyal to the Holy See to-day than ever. The sympathy that has gone out to the prisoner of the Vatican, as well as a certain sentiment of co-suffering that the people, ground down by heavy taxation, have felt with the Pope, have made them more loyal in their fealty to the head of the church.

Not only in statecraft has Leo proved himself an adept, but as a scholar he has elevated the standards of literary taste and of ecclesiastical studies. In calling the professors of the Catholic world back to the scholastic philosophy he has laid the foundations deep and strong for theological science, and he has pointed out the way back to the great truths of the supernatural order for much of the rationalistic and scientific knowledge of the age. During the last half of the

nineteenth century agnostic science triumphed in most of the universities of the world; but the human mind could not be content with its barrenness and its negations, and in reaching out for something more positive, as well as for a solution of the religious problems that always perplex human hearts, the old philosophy of Aristotle constituted the best vantage ground, and with this solid basis to stand on the scholars of the day can much more readily reach out for that amalgamation between the modern and ancient schools. Historical science owes not a little to the man who threw open the archives of the Vatican, and who wanted the truth to be told, no matter who was injured thereby, and not a few scholars have profited by the initiative of Leo, with the result that a good deal of the history that was written in German and English under the influence of the fierce antagonisms of the Protestant revolt will have to, and is now being rewritten. In Biblical science the rationalizing Higher Critics were having a free hand and a wide field, with the result that the sacred books were torn into tatters and the old reverence for the Scriptures as the word of God was dying out among non-Catholic people. The Bible was all they had to depend upon, and when it was gone there came a decadence of the religious spirit. Leo came to the rescue, and there was nothing closer to his heart than the outcome of the Biblical Commission he established, and amidst the suffering of his last sickness one of his admonitions was to see that these investigations were brought to a speedy and wholesome issue. So too in social studies, which are now vexing the nations, Leo has given a Magna Charta in his Encyclical on the "Condition of Labor." He has affirmed principles there that seemed radical in their enunciation, but now that they are being applied to practical difficulties, are doing not a little to bring about the harmonization of Labor with Capital. The Catholic University of America was born of his inspiration; the universities in France and Germany and among the Slavonic peoples were started through his initiative. Seminaries in Rome for the education of the students of the Oriental rites owe their existence to his generous gifts and derive their permanency from his largesses.

All these and many more great things that he has done for the intellectual, make him the very prince among scholars.

In the midst of his many labors with governments and among scholars he has not forgotten the devotional life of the people. His own spirit of prayer has been imparted to the multitudes, so that there has been a distinct revival in the devotional life of the church. The devotion to the Sacred Heart, with its first Friday throngs, has received a distinct impetus from his instructions. The time-honored Rosary has become a more favorite devotion among all classes, and the October devotions, as well as the prayers after daily Mass, have become distinctive features of the devotional life of the church through his directions. The same may be said of the devotion to the Holy Spirit with its annual Pentecostal novena. He has not only known what to suggest, but his practical sense has so arranged that his suggestions were not mere ephemeral directions but were soon incorporated into the very soul-life of the people. No one can look back over the last generation and make any contrasts without saying that Leo has done as much for the religious spirit of the world as any of his predecessors.

All these considerations convince us that Leo has been an all-round great Pope. He has been a Leader among men. He has left the impress of his spirit on his age. His life has spanned one of the most critical periods of human activity. When the old order had been completely changed, in the rearranging of the new elements and in the re-establishing of new forces there was need of one with more than human wisdom to guide our ways and to direct our feet. If ever in the world there was need of a providential man; of one whose feet, while planted on the earth, yet whose head was above the clouds, and whose heart was in touch with divine things, it was during this marvellous age of ours; and Leo has been such an interpreter of divine wisdom to the children of men. His long life has covered the nineteenth century; there were wrapped up in him the experiences of men and things through this most fateful of all eras; and it has been permitted to lap over into the twentieth century, so that with the wisdom of the past he may point out the ways to greater triumphs in the years to come.

His Message to the Twentieth Century is one of the most thrilling documents that have been sent out to the world. It ranks with the Magna Charta of English history or the Declaration of Independence of our own, and in the years to come it will be enshrined as they are in the hearts of multitudes of people:

"To reject dogma is simply to deny Christianity. It is evident that they whose intellects reject the yoke of Christ are obstinately striving against God. Having shaken off God's authority, they are by no means freer, for they will fall beneath some human sway.

"God alone is life. All other beings partake of life, but are not life. Christ, from all eternity and by his very nature, is 'the Life,' just as he is 'the Truth,' because he is God of God. If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth (John xv. 6).

"Once remove all impediments and allow the spirit of Christ to revive and grow in a nation, and that nation shall be healed.

"The world has heard enough of the so-called 'rights of man.' Let it hear something of the rights of God.

"The common welfare urgently demands a return to him from whom we should never have gone astray; to him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,—and this on the part not only of

individuals but of society as a whole."

Leo, Great Pontiff of the age, thou mayest well lay down the burden of thy four score years and ten! Thou deservest well of humanity. You have been a great leader in the Church of God. The weary pilgrimage of a desert land is over, and from Nebo's height there stretches before you the Promised Land of rest and joy and everlasting bliss.

"Hail, Champion of the Faith! whose beacon light, Held high in trembling hands, illum'ned the world With such a blaze as ne'er before hath shone, E'en from the torch that Gregory upheld Or Pius kindled. Hark, the swelling sound From many million throats! Thy children see The Signal, and in serried legions stand Before the grateful world, and with one voice Demand for thee, Great Father and Great Friend, The joy and peace that is thy due."

THE PAPACY NEVER DIES.

AT the present writing the question of choosing a successor to Leo XIII. in the pontifical chair is of paramount importance. For this reason the traditional method of selecting a Pope is a topic of more than ordinary interest.

Popes may die, but the Papacy lives for ever. With temporal princes their succession may come to an end. Reigning families may become exhausted; dynasties have come and gone; but by divine right the line of the Popes will last till the end of the world. The methods of electing the successor of St. Peter have changed in the nineteen centuries that the Popes have reigned, but as soon as one is canonically elected he assumes unto himself all the prerogatives of the Papal Chair. There is no prince in all Christendom whose power is greater. The influence of the Vicar of Christ is not confined to any race or people. It is not exercised by force of arms, nor is it maintained through the civil power. His jurisdiction is over the hearts of 260,000,000, and his word is obeyed with far more alacrity and submission than is accorded to any other ruler in the world. He is the successor of the Prince of the Apostles. He holds to all the faithful the place of the Vicar of Christ, and they acknowledge his infallibility in matters of faith and morals. These facts alone give to the election of the Pope an importance that is not attributable to any other event in history.

In the first place, it is a condemned proposition to maintain that the laity have any strict right of suffrage in the election of the Pope. In ancient times the vote of the Roman clergy, cast in the presence of the faithful, was the elective power; but as the papal dignity increased in wealth and splendor of temporal authority it often became an object of human ambition. For this reason it was deemed necessary to enact laws that definitely settled the mode of election. This was done by Symmachus in the year 499.

The history of the interference of civil princes in the election of the Popes fills many a dark chapter in the papal records. It is the old story of the state, with its stronger power, laying its blighting hand on the liberties of the church. It was not till 1059, under Nicholas II., that the Papacy was completely emancipated from any subjection to the Empire, and his successor, Gregory VII., the glorious Hildebrand, was the last Pope who ever informed the emperor of his election before proceeding to be consecrated and enthroned. The Third General Council of the Lateran (1179) confined the right to elect to the cardinals without reference to the rest of the Roman clergy or of the people, and required a two-thirds vote for a valid election.

The word conclave is of a little later origin. It originated in the custom of selecting a hall whose door could be securely fastened (*cum clavi*—with a key) behind the voting cardinals until they agreed by a two-thirds majority on a candidate. In some instances, where the stubborn electors held out, a diminishing quantity of food was served so as to hasten an agreement, and in one instance, where a year and one-half elapsed before a definite result was obtained, the roof was removed and the venerable fathers were left to the inclemencies of the weather until they came to a conclusion.

Any one may theoretically be elected Pope. He need not be a cardinal, nor even a priest. He need not be an Italian. Not a few persons of ignoble birth and of mean antecedents have been elected to the Papacy, which they have illustrated by their virtues or their learning. Sixtus V., 1585-1595, was a swineherd in his youth, and he repeatedly affirmed the fact when he was Pope. It was Sixtus V. of whom Queen Elizabeth of England said, when asked to marry, that she would offer her hand in marriage to no one but Sixtus, and he would not accept it. The present Cardinal Gotti's father was a stevedore. Almost every nationality has had a representative in the chair of

Peter, but for several centuries the Italians have kept the accession within their own nation, for the reason that the popedom has been a civil principality.

As soon as the Pope breathes his last the Cardinal Chamberlain takes possession of the Apostolic palace. He proceeds to the death chamber, assures himself of, and instructs a notary to certify to, the fact that the Pope is really dead. Then the ring of the Fisherman is broken and the seal destroyed. The body is embalmed and carried in procession to the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament in the Vatican basilica, where it remains for three days, the feet protruding a little through an opening in the iron railing which encloses the chapel, that the faithful may approach and kiss the embroidered slipper. The nine days of funeral services are gone through with. During the last three days the services are performed about an elevated and magnificent catafalque. On each of these days five cardinals in turn give the absolution, and on the ninth day a funeral oration is pronounced. The body is reverently put into a cyprus-wood coffin. This is put into a leaden case properly inscribed, and then all is placed in a wooden box covered with a red pall, and in this condition it is carried to the last resting-place, previously selected by the deceased.

On the tenth day the cardinals assemble in the forenoon, and the preparations are made for the Conclave. All the persons who are to remain in the Conclave—as prelates, custodians, attendants on the cardinals, physicians, barbers, masons—are passed in review and take an oath not to speak even among themselves of matters concerning the election. Every avenue leading to the Conclave, except the eight loopholes, is walled up by the masons; but one door is left so that it may be opened by the late coming cardinals or to let out any one who may be expelled, or who for any good reason may be obliged to go out. Any one who leaves cannot return. This only door has a combination lock, to be opened by the key of the prince marshal outside and of the cardinal chamberlain inside.

The food for the cardinals is introduced by a turn, so well known in convents of cloistered communities.

The next day, after Mass of the Holy Ghost, the balloting begins, and continues until some one receives the necessary two-thirds. The ballots are cast into a chalice on the altar.

There are now 63 cardinals in the Sacred College. Some may, on account of distance—as Cardinal Moran of Australia—or on account of age or infirmities, be prevented from being present. If they were all present it would require 42 votes to elect. It would seem from the present aspect of the Sacred College that a good many ballots may be taken before the requisite number is secured.

In the last Conclave Cardinal Pecci was so pre-eminently a leader that it took but one ballot practically to settle the question of his election. In all probability it will take more than one to settle the choice in the present Conclave. It is ordinarily very foolish to prophesy, but it is especially so when the subject matter of the prophecy is the outcome of the Conclave. There is an old Roman proverb which says, "He who enters the Conclave as Pope comes out of it as Cardinal." It does not always happen that the verdict of the Cardinals ratifies that of public opinion or of the public press. In fact the more prominent cardinals, who are well known to the world at large, are generally the leaders of parties, and are for that very reason the less likely to draw unto themselves the suffrages of two-thirds of the Sacred College. They are the ones who have positive characteristics and practically stand for definite policies, and for that reason they have awakened opposition to themselves. Moreover leaders are not always necessary in the Papal Chair. Leo XIII. has been so pre-eminently an aggressive character, and his brilliant mind has illuminated so many departments of church work, and his organizing hand has co-ordinated so many church activities, that a quiet, placid, conservative man might easily maintain the status quo for many years to come. The meek and humble Cardinal Chiaramonti, who became Pius VII., was far better fitted to withstand the eagle-like aggressiveness of Napoleon the First than Cardinal Consalvi would have been, or a dominating spirit like Sixtus the Fifth would have been. If the latter were pitted against a Napoleon, there would have been wreck and ruin throughout the Church.

Moreover, in discussing the *papabile*, one is often deceived in the qualities of a cardinal's character. Cardinal Pecci was ranked among the liberals, and it was expected that he would establish a policy of agreement with the Italian government; but the very first act of Leo XIII. was to affirm irrevocably the attitude of protest against the usurper who ruled in the civil principality of the church. There is always a reserve in the ecclesiastical world in Rome that the outside world rarely penetrates, and consequently it knows little of the great moving forces in the Sacred College.

These things have been said in order that too much weight may not be placed on any conjectural list of would-be popes. Still it is allowable to discuss the chances various candidates may have and the characteristics that would seem best fitted to the times and the difficulties before the church.

The question of the Christian Democracy is one of the great burning problems. Socialism is a growing quantity in Germany and elsewhere. It can be met in the best way by diffusing a deep and wide-spread knowledge of the truest socialistic principles among the people. Hence the propaganda of Christian Democracy was instituted by Leo XIII. The next Pope must carry this

work to its fullest perfection. The next Pope must be one who will extend a warm hand of greeting to the throngs who have been born amidst Protestantism and who now are as sheep without a shepherd. Organized Protestantism is fast going to pieces, and unless the next Pope opens wide the door of the church to the wandering flocks they will be led away into poisonous pastures. The next Pope should have an intimate knowledge of the great English-speaking races, where the church is as strong as it is anywhere else in the world. Leo frequently recognized the strength of Catholicism among the English-speaking people, and frequently affirmed that "America is the future." A mere nationalistic Pope, who would not be able to rise above the provincialism of his own race, would be, humanly speaking, a disaster. The next Pope should be one who would be able to open out the resources of truth and the wealth of religion that there is in the bosom of the church, and bid all nations come unto her, especially those who are without a knowledge of God, to drink of the living fountains.

The names of Rampolla and Gotti and Serafino Vanutelli and Satolli and Sarto and Ferrara are most frequently mentioned.

Cardinal Rampolla, the present Secretary of State, has been an *alter ego* of Leo, is in touch with his ideas, and is intimately acquainted with his most secret policies. He is, moreover, a man of profound piety and deep religious spirit. He may be depended on to carry out the projects of Leo XIII. in all their detail. Were he elected his reign would be in touch with progress.

Cardinal Gotti is a Carmelite, a man who has been trained to the religious life. All his life he has been a close student and a man of prayerful and devout spirit. He has held many high and responsible positions. In the pursuit of duty he has visited our western world; at one time was Delegate Apostolic to Brazil. Though he has not been in touch with high politics as some of his confrères in the College of Cardinals have been, still it is said that the Kaiser has expressed the greatest admiration for him and has given it out that he would be pleased if Cardinal Gotti was the one selected. Gotti has come from the very loins of the people, and if he were the next Pope it would be altogether likely that strong sympathies would be established between him and the common people. The many social questions that need the bold hand of religious leadership for their solution may find such vigorous treatment in Cardinal Gotti.

Cardinal Satolli is a profound theologian, having been most of his life a professor. He has, moreover, been in touch with life other than Italian, and he professes to love America very much. It is quite certain that his residence in this country has given him larger knowledge of the great races of the world. Moreover he has been a close student of Leo, and he has absorbed not a little of his broad and comprehensive spirit.

But a truce to all these vain prognostications. When the door of the Conclave shuts behind the last cardinal, the intrigues of the world are shut out. There will be no vetos from the civil power, for more than ever is the Church separated from the civil power, and more than ever is she in touch with the people. The Catholics of the world are able to contemplate the future with greater equanimity and with a larger hope than ever in the history of the church. In some few places the church may be in sore straits, but never before has there been such world-wide loyalty to the See of Rome, or such profound enthusiasm for the advancement of religion. They who have assisted during the last few years at the great ceremonies of the Pontifical Jubilee, and have seen the multitudes from every race and country, and have realized that sensation of greatness and strength and energy that seemed latent in the throngs that filled the grandest basilica on earth, and have witnessed the deep feeling of world-power and universal supremacy that possessed the hearts of the people, as the white phantom of the Pope passed along like an apparition, have no element in their vision of the future that proclaims anything but glorious success and increasing greatness for the Church of Christ.

[Transcriber's Note: After a vacancy of fifteen days, the papacy was filled by Cardinal Sarto on August 4, 1903. Cardinal Sarto took the name Pope Pius X., and forty years after his death in 1914, he was declared a saint by Pope Pius XII.]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LEO XIII., THE GREAT LEADER ***

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