Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Society of Jesus on July 21, 1773. In the preceding decades, the Jesuits had suffered expulsions from the Catholic empires of Portugal (1759), France (1764), and Spain (1767), where they had become handy scapegoats for kings or princes under civic pressure. In Portugal, for example, charges against the Society included creating a state within the state, inciting revolutions among indigenous populations in South America, and failing to adequately condemn regicide. Cardinals in the papal conclave of 1769 elected Giovanni Vincenzo Antonio Ganganelli in part because he had assured the Bourbons that he would suppress the Jesuits, which he did four years later with the papal brief Dominus ac Redemptor. As a result of the expulsions and suppression, hundreds of schools around the globe were closed or transferred to other religious orders or the state; missions closed around the world; and virtually all Jesuits became ex-Jesuits, whether they continued on as priests or as laymen. The Society would not be fully restored until 1814, by Pius VII.

For the lasting memory of the action

Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace announced by the prophet, when he came into this world first proclaimed peace to the shepherds through the angels. Then before he ascended into heaven, he announced peace through himself. More than once he left the task of peacemaking to his disciples when he had reconciled all things to God the Father. He brought peace through the blood of his cross upon all things that are on earth or in heaven. He also gave the apostles the ministry of conciliation and entrusted to them this word of reconciliation so that, serving as envoys of Christ, who is not the God of dissension, but of peace and love, they might proclaim peace to the whole world. They were to apply their utmost efforts and labors to the end that all those begotten in Christ be solicitous to preserve unity of spirit in the bond of peace. There was to be one body and one spirit as they have been called in the one hope of our calling to which we never arrive unless, as St. Gregory the Great says, we hasten to be of one mind with our neighbor.

This very word and ministry of reconciliation has been divinely entrusted to us in a certain more powerful manner. When we were first advanced beyond our merits to this See of Peter, we recalled and had before our eyes day and night this ministry of peace. We carried it very deeply inscribed on our heart. We strove with all our might to meet its challenge. We constantly implored divine aid that God might deign to inspire us and the Lord’s entire flock with thoughts and designs for peace and to open to us the surest and firmest way to acquiring peace. Furthermore, we well know that the divine plan has placed us over peoples and kingdoms. In cultivating God’s vineyard and in preserving the house of the Christian religion whose cornerstone is Christ, we root up and we destroy and we dispose and we scatter and we build and we plant. This has always been our mind and firm intention that we ought not
leave anything undone for the peace and quiet of the Christian republic. We ought to act by planting, by building, by doing whatever is suitable. Similarly, when the same bond of charity requires it, we should be prompt and ready to uproot and to destroy anything even if it be most pleasant and gratifying to us and even if doing without it would cause the greatest distress and mental anguish.

There certainly ought to be no doubt that religious orders should be assigned a principal role in acquiring the good and happiness of the Catholic commonwealth. The orders constituted in every age the grandest ornament, bulwark, and usefulness of Christ’s universal Church. Accordingly, the Apostolic See had not only approved these orders and supported them with blessings, but also has enhanced them with many benefits, exemptions, privileges, and faculties, in order that as a result of these favors, the orders might be more and more stirred and inflamed to cultivate piety and religion, to form correctly the people’s morals by word and example, and to preserve and strengthen among the faithful the unity of the faith. But when at times a situation developed so that the Christian people no longer perceived in a regular order the very rich fruits and hoped for benefits, which the Institute was to produce, or the religious seemed rather to be doing harm and to be disturbing the tranquility of the people other than providing benefits, the same Apostolic See, which had taken pains and had used its authority to plant orders, has not hesitated to strengthen them with new laws, to recall them to their original strictness of life, or even to completely uproot and disperse them.

For this reason our predecessor Pope Innocent III, when he found that the excessive diversity of religious orders was causing grave confusion in the Church, strictly forbade in Lateran Council IV anyone to found a new religious order and ordered that anyone who wished to enter religion should choose one of the approved orders. He further decreed that anyone who wanted to found a religious house should choose the rule and institute from the approved orders. Hence it followed that it was not permitted to found a religious order at all without the special permission of the Roman Pontiff. This was done well, for when new congregations were being founded for the sake of greater perfection, the forms of the future religious life had to be examined and weighed by the Holy Apostolic See. The examination was to prevent very many inconveniences and perhaps even evils arising in the Church under the guise of a greater good and holier life.

Although our predecessor Innocent III very prudently made these provisions, nonetheless the persistent importuning of some regular orders later extorted approbation from the Holy See. Not only did this happen, but also the presumptuous forwardness of various orders, especially not yet approved mendicant orders, made for an almost unchecked multiplication of orders. Knowing this full well, Pope Gregory X, likewise our predecessor, renewed the ruling of his predecessor Innocent III in order to confront the evil immediately. In the general council of Lyons, he more stringently forbade that anyone thereafter found an order or congregation or take the habit of a new congregation. He outlawed for all time all the mendicant congregations and orders that were founded after Lateran Council IV and which had not earned confirmation from the Holy See. As to the groups approved by the Holy See, he decreed that they continue in existence in the following way: the professed of these same orders were permitted to remain in them if they wished, but the orders were to admit no one to profession thereafter; they were not to acquire any new house or any property; they were not able to alienate any house or other
property in their possession without the special permission of the Holy See. He reserved all those possessions to the disposition of the Apostolic See to aid the Holy Land or the poor or for other pious uses. The property was to be converted through the local ordinaries or those whom the Holy See commissioned. He absolutely forbade that members minister to externs. They were not to preach, to hear confession, or even to bury the dead.

He stated that in this constitution the Orders of Preachers and Friars Minor were not included. The evident utility of these orders for the universal Church rendered them approved. He wanted in addition the Orders of the Hermits of St. Augustine and the Carmelites to remain in their present state since their institutes preceded the aforementioned Lateran Council IV. Finally to individual members of the orders to whom this constitution applied he granted general permission to transfer to other approved orders. This, however, was to be done in such a way that no order or convent transfer itself and its locale completely to another order or convent unless a prior special permission had been obtained from the Apostolic See.

Other Roman Pontiffs, our predecessors, have followed in the footsteps of Gregory according to the circumstances of the times. It would be a lengthy task to report all the decrees. Among others, however, Pope Clement V, likewise our predecessor, in his letter of 2 May 1312, suppressed and totally extinguished the military order of the templars because of their universal bad name. He did this though they had been legally confirmed and at other times had served the Christian republic well so that the Holy See heaped upon them significant benefits, privileges, faculties, exemptions, and permissions. He acted even though the general Council of Vienne to which he had entrusted the task of examining the order, voted to abstain from a formal and definitive verdict.

Pope Pius V of happy memory and also our predecessor, whose outstanding sanctity the Catholic Church dutifully reveres and venerates, destroyed and completely wiped out the Regular Order of the Brothers Humiliati. This order existed prior to the Lateran Council and had been approved by Innocent III, Honorius III, Gregory IX and Nicholas V, Roman Pontiffs and likewise our predecessors. Pius V acted because of their disobedience to apostolic decrees, their domestic and external discords, and their showing no sign at all of future virtue. Further, some of their order criminally conspired in the attempted murder of St. Carlo Borromeo, a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, the order’s Protector and apostolic visitor.

Pope Urban VIII of recent memory and also our predecessor, through the brief of 6 February 1626 forever suppressed and did away with the Congregation of the Reformed Friars Conventual. The congregation had been solemnly approved and enriched with many benefits and favors by Pope Sixtus V of happy memory and also our predecessor. Urban VIII acted because spiritual fruits for the Church did not emanate from the Friars. Indeed, very many differences had arisen between the reformed Friars Conventual and the non-reformed ones. He granted and assigned to the Order of Friars Minor Conventual of St. Francis the houses, convents, real estate, furniture, property, possessions, and rights
pertaining to that aforementioned congregation. He excepted only the house in Naples and the house of St. Anthony of Padua named “of the City.” The last he assigned and incorporated into the Apostolic Camera and he reserved it to his and his successors’ disposition. Finally, he permitted to the Friars of the suppressed congregation transfer to the Friars Capuchins of St. Francis, those called the Observant.

The same Pope Urban VIII through another brief of 2 December 1643 forever suppressed, eliminated, and abolished the Regular Order of Sts. Ambrose and Barnabas at the Grove. He subjected the regulars of the suppressed order to the jurisdiction and discipline of the local ordinaries. He also gave permission to the regulars to transfer to other regular orders approved by the Holy See. Pope Innocent X of happy memory and also our predecessor solemnly confirmed the suppression through his letter of 1 April 1645. Further he reduced the benefices, houses, and monasteries that formerly were under religious jaw to the diocesan state and he declared that they would be such in perpetuity.

The same predecessor Innocent X by his brief of 16 March 1645 reduced the Poor Servants of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools to a simple congregation. Grave disturbances had been stirred among regulars of the order, and Innocent reversed the well-considered solemn approval of our predecessor Pope Gregory XV. The members were not to take vows and the order would be like the institute of the congregation of secular priests of the Oratory, founded by St. Philip Neri at the church of Mary in Vallicella in Rome. He permitted the regulars of the said reduced order to pass to any approved religious group. He forbade the admission of novices and the profession of those already admitted. Finally, the authority and jurisdiction that had resided to the Minister General, visitors, and other superiors he transferred completely to the local ordinaries. All these measures were in effect through the course of several years. Then the Apostolic See, having recognized the usefulness of the aforementioned institute recalled it to the original form of solemn vows and the full status as a regular order.

By a brief of 29 October 1650, the same predecessor Innocent X completely suppressed the Order of St. Basil of Armenia because of discords and dissension. The regulars of said suppressed order he subjected to the complete jurisdiction and obedience of the local ordinaries. They were to wear the garb of the secular clergy. The revenues of the suppressed convents were to provide appropriate sustenance for them. He also granted to them the faculty of transferring to any approved religious group. Similarly the predecessor Innocent X perpetually abolished the Regular Congregation of Priests of the Buon Gesù by another brief of 22 June 1651. He noticed that no spiritual fruit could be expected from the congregation. He subjected the said regulars to the jurisdiction of the local ordinaries. Suitable support was to be provided for them from the revenues of the suppressed congregation and members received the faculty of transferring to any religious group approved by the Holy See. He reserved to his own decision the application of the goods of the said congregation for other pious uses.
Finally, Pope Clement IX of happy memory and likewise our predecessor, adverted to the fact that three regular orders, namely, the Canon Regulars of St George in Alga, the Hieronymites of of Fiesole, and finally the Jesuati founded by St. John Colombini were bringing little or no profit to the Christian people nor could he hope that they someday would. He took counsel about suppressing and abolishing them and he did so with his brief of 6 December 1668. When the Republic of Venice asked for their goods and revenues, which were quite considerable, he decided that the funds should cover the expenses needed for the war in Crete against the Turks.

But in deciding and carrying out all these measures, our predecessors always judged it better to use prudent consultation which completely eliminated emotional upheavals and which they deemed more conducive to the removal of all dissent and partisanship. Hence they bypassed the unpleasantness and troublesome procedures that characterize judicial trials. They adhered only to the laws of prudence and exercised the fullness of power that has been abundantly bestowed on the popes as the Vicars of Christ and heads of the Christian state. They solved every case without giving the regular orders destined for suppression leave and opportunity of exercising their rights or refuting the very grave charges because of which the popes were brought to adopting such a plan of action.

We have before our eyes these and other weighty examples. At the same time, we burn with a strong desire that in the decision that will follow, we proceed confidently and safely. We have omitted no careful inquiry into ascertaining the origins of the regular order, which is commonly, called the Society of Jesus, its progress, and its present state. From these we have learned that it was instituted by its Holy Founder for the salvation of souls, the conversion of heretics and especially of infidels, and finally for the greater increase of piety and religion. To attain this very desirable end more easily and successfully, the Society has been consecrated to God by a most strict vow of evangelical poverty both in common and in particular. Only colleges of studies or education are excepted. For these, resources and the capacity of possessing revenues have been granted, but in such a way that nothing from these revenues can be spent or converted to the advantage, utility, or use of the Society itself.

Pope Paul III of happy memory and our predecessor first approved these and other most holy rules of the Society of Jesus in his letter of 27 September 1540. He also gave the faculty of establishing laws and constitutions that were to provide most firmly for the defense, safety, and governance of the Society. Although our same predecessor Paul initially limited membership to 60, nonetheless in another letter of 28 February 1543 (14 March 1544), he allowed superiors to receive all whom it seemed fitting and necessary to admit. Then in 1549 in a brief of 15 November, the same predecessor.

Paul bestowed many extensive privileges on the Society, among these was the indult, which at another time he had granted to the Fathers General, to have the faculty to admit twenty priests as Spiritual Coadjutors and to grant them the same faculties, favor, and authority which were granted to the
professed members. Now Pope Paul desired and enjoined that without any numerical limit, the indult be extended to all others whom the Fathers General deemed suitable. And further, he exempted the Society, all its members and subjects, and its property of any kind from the authority, jurisdiction, and supervision of ordinaries. Over these he asserted legal rights and took them under his protection and that of the Holy See.

The generosity and munificence toward the Society from our other predecessors was hardly less. For it is clear that the privileges bestowed upon the Society were either confirmed or increased by new additions or most clearly declared by our predecessors of happy memory Julius III, Paul IV, Pius IV and V, Gregory XIII, Sixtus V, Gregory XJV, Clement VIII, Paul V, Leo XI, Gregory XV, Urban VIII, and other Roman Pontiffs.

Nevertheless, from the tone and words of the apostolic constitutions, one clearly gathers that in the Society almost from its beginning, seeds of dissension and rivalry grew. The discord was not only among members, but also with members of other religious orders, with the secular clergy, with academies, with universities, with public schools of letters, and even with princes in whose realms the Society had been received. The debates and differences were stirred up concerning the type and nature of the vows, the time of admission to profession, the faculty of dismissing members, the advancement of members to sacred orders without a suitable title and without final vows, which advancement is against the decrees of the Council of Trent and of our predecessor Pope Pius V. Further, dissension arose concerning the absolute power which the Society’s Father General wields, and about other matters pertaining to the governance of the Society. There was debate on various doctrinal topics, on the schools, on exemptions and privileges which local ordinaries and other persons with ecclesiastical or secular authority contended were harmful to their jurisdiction and rights. And finally there was no lack of very grave accusations against members that caused no little disturbance to the peace and tranquility of the Christian commonwealth.

Hence many complaints were made against the Society. Some princes backed these complaints with their authority and reports. The reports were addressed to our predecessors and popes of recent memory: Paul IV, Pius V, and Sixtus V. Among the princes the late Philip II, the Catholic king of Spain, sought from our predecessor Sixtus V that, he decree, and commit himself to an apostolic visitation of the Society. Philip had his own serious reasons for asking, and further the Spanish inquisition raised a hue and cry against the immoderate privileges of the Society, its form of government, and disputed topics on which learned and holy members of the Society held positions: Philip saw to it that all this was expounded to Sixtus V. That same predecessor Sixtus V acceded to the requests of King Philip, which he saw were justified. He chose for the role of apostolic visitor a bishop acceptable to all for his prudence, virtue, and learning. Further, Sixtus designated a committee of several cardinals who were to exercise painstaking care to accomplish the task. But said predecessor Sixtus V was carried off by an early death. The very salutary project begun by him disappeared and came to nothing.
When Pope Gregory XIV of happy memory was raised to the highest apostolic position, he again fully approved in his letter of 28 June 1591 the Institute of the Society. He ordered that whatever privileges had been bestowed upon it by his predecessors be considered valid and in effect. That privilege was especially upheld by which members could be expelled and dismissed from the Society without use of a judicial form, without, that is, a prior judicial inquiry, without minutes being composed, with no judicial order observed, with no conditions even substantial ones, observed. Only the truth of the deed is regarded; account is taken only of guilt, of reasonable cause, of persons, and of other circumstances. He further imposed an absolute silence and he forbade under pain of excommunication, anyone to dare to attack directly or indirectly the Institute of the Society, its Constitutions or its decrees or to take measures that any of these be changed in any way. He left, however, to anyone the right, when he thought something needed to be added, diminished or changed, to be able to notify and propose this only to himself and to the reigning Roman Pontiffs either immediately or through legates or nuncios of the, Apostolic See.

These measures were so far from checking the clamor and complaints against the Society that very unpleasant wrangling spread through the world about the Society’s teaching which very many represented as repugnant to orthodox faith and good morals. Internal and external dissensions cropped up. More and more charges were made against the Society for excessive greed for worldly goods. From all these disturbances, there arose the enormous sadness and trouble that afflicted the Apostolic See and the actions taken by some princes against the Society.

As a result, when the Society was about to request a new confirmation of its Institute and privileges from our predecessor of happy memory, Pope Paul V, it was forced to petition him to ratify and confirm with his authority certain decrees of the Fifth General Congregation. He cited them verbatim in his letter of 4 September 1606. In the decree it is most discreetly stated that internal rivalries and cliques of members as well as complaints and representations of outsiders against the Society have compelled the convened members to formulate the following statute:

Because our Society, called forth by the Lord for the spread of the faith and the harvest of souls, can happily attain the end it proposes through the ministries proper to its Institute-spiritual armaments carried under the banner of the cross with benefit to the Church and the edification of our neighbors, that same Society will hinder the achievement of these goals and expose itself to extreme perils if it were to engage in what is secular and belongs to political affairs and the governance of states. Therefore, our predecessors have very wisely decided that, as soldiers of Christ, we ought not involve ourselves with other matters that are inimical to our profession.

But since, especially in times as perilous as these, in many places and under various princes (whose esteem and benevolence, our father Ignatius, of holy memory, felt should be fostered as furthering the divine service), our religious institute is not in good repute due perhaps to the fault of some or to ambition or to indiscreet zeal, and since, on the other hand the good odour of Christ must accompany any apostolic success, the congregation has decreed that we must refrain from every appearance of evil and counteract as far as possible any complaints, even such as arise out of false suspicions. Wherefore
by this decree the congregation gravely and solemnly forbids all of ours to involve themselves in public affairs of this nature on any grounds, even if invited or enticed, or to deviate from our Institute upon any pleas or persuasions. Moreover, the congregation entrusts to the reverend definitors the task of accurately decreeing and defining by what more effective remedies the cure for this disease may wherever necessary be applied.

To the great sorrow of our heart, we observe that the aforementioned remedies as well as many subsequent ones have had no power or efficacy in uprooting and dispelling so many turmoils, accusations and complaints against the oft-mentioned Society. In vain others of our predecessors, Urban VIII, Clement IX, X, XI, and XII, Alexander VII and VIII, and Innocent X, XI, XII, and XIII, and Benedict XIV tried to restore the most hoped for peace of the Church. They issued many salutary constitutions both on the conducting of business and on very grave dissensions and quarrels. Business matters involved those outside the missions and practices not allowed for the missions’ benefit. The dissensions and quarrels encompassed local ordinaries, religious orders, pious shrines, and communities of every sort in Europe, Asia, and America. No small harm for souls and wonderment of peoples were sharply stirred up by the Society. There was dissension on the theory and practice of rites for certain ethnic groups. These were used in various places and departed from those approved by the universal Church. There was debate about the Jesuits’ application and interpretation of views that the Holy See had deservedly proscribed as being scandalous and harmful to good morals. There was, finally, concern on other matters of the greatest importance, which were especially necessary to maintain the purity of Christian dogma. From these dissensions, many drawbacks and difficulties have flowed no less in our time than in earlier ages. That is, there have been disturbances and uprisings in some Catholic regions. There were persecutions of the Church in Asia and Europe. An enormous sorrow has been placed upon our predecessors. Among them was Pope Innocent XI of pious memory who, compelled by necessity, came to the point of forbidding to the Society the entrance of novices. Then Pope Innocent XIII was forced to threaten the same penalty. And finally Pope Benedict XIV of recent memory ordered a visitation of the houses and colleges in the domain of our very dear son, the King of Portugal and of the Algarves. No comfort for the Apostolic See, no aid for the Society, and no good for the Christian public resulted from the most recent apostolic letter of Pope Clement XIII of happy memory, our immediate predecessor. The letter was more extorted, to use an expression of our predecessor Gregory X in the aforementioned ecumenical Council of Lyons, rather than requested. In it the Institute of the Society of Jesus was greatly commended and again approved.

After so many and so grave storms and tempests, all good people hoped that the longed-for day would dawn which would bring tranquility and peace. But far more difficult and troublesome times befell the See of Peter in our same predecessor Clement XIII’s reign. Loud complaints against the said Society grew more numerous each day. Indeed, in some places there were very dangerous seditions, tumults, dissensions and scandals that shook and profoundly upset the bond of Christian charity. They inflamed the minds of the faithful with partisan zealotry, hatred, and enmity. The situation was seen to come to the point of such discord and danger that our very dear children in Christ, the Kings of France, Spain, Portugal, and the Two Sicilies, changed their attitude. They had inherited devotion and generosity toward the Society from their predecessors. The Society was greatly commended by almost
all. But now the kings were forced to send away and expel members of the Society from their realms, possessions, and provinces. They thought that this extreme measure was the only remedy to many evils and that it was absolutely necessary to keep Christian people in the bosom of Holy Mother Church from challenging, provoking, and lashing out against each other.

Our aforementioned dearest sons in Christ thought the remedy could not be sure and apt for reconciling the entire Christian world unless the Society itself was utterly eliminated and completely suppressed. Accordingly, they expounded their wishes and desires to Pope Clement XIII. With the authority and entreaties which they could muster, they demanded that the Pope most prudently and efficaciously look to the lasting security of his subjects and the good of the entire Church. The unexpected death of the Pontiff hindered the course of events. Hence, we, who by the dispensation of divine mercy have been placed on the Chair of Peter, did immediately receive the kings’ prayers, petitions, and entreaties. To these, very many bishops have added their earnest views, as have other men who are greatly distinguished for their dignity, learning, and religious observance.

In order to form the safest plan in such a grave and momentous matter, we judged that we needed time. We wanted to be able not only to make careful inquiries, considered evaluations, and guided deliberations, but also to implore with many groans and constant prayer the Father of Lights for his special help and protection. We took care that all the faithful aided us before God with their prayers and works of piety. Among other things, we wanted to investigate the foundation for the widespread view that the Council of Trent had solemnly approved and confirmed the clerical order of the Society of Jesus. We found that nothing was done at Trent other than to grant an exemption to a general decree. That decree provided that for other regular orders, novices who upon completion of the novitiate were deemed suitable, were admitted to profession. If not suitable, they were to be sent away from the monastery. Therefore the same holy synod (session 25, chapter 16: “On Regulars”) declared it did not wish to introduce novelty or to prevent the clerical order of the Society of Jesus from serving the Lord and his Church according to their pious Institute, approved by the Apostolic See.

We have used many and very necessary means. Helped, as we trust, by the presence and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we are compelled by the necessity of our duty to maintain, foster, and strengthen the peace and quiet of the Christian state. As far as our strength allows, we are strictly held to completely removing from the Church’s midst everything that could be detrimental to it, even the slightest thing. Further we have noticed that the Society of Jesus is no longer able to produce the very rich fruits and usefulness for which it was founded and approved and enhanced with so many privileges by our predecessors. Indeed, it happens that scarcely or not at all can the true and lasting peace of the Church be restored as long as the Society is intact. Accordingly, we are moved by these very grave reasons and are pressed by other considerations that the laws of prudence and the best government of the universal Church impose upon us, and which we keep stored deeply in our mind. We follow in the footsteps of our predecessors, especially of Gregory X in the general council of Lyons. Now there is question of the Society, of its Institute, and of its privileges, which assimilate it to the mendicant orders. From sure knowledge and fullness of apostolic power, we abolish and suppress the oft-mentioned Society. We take away and abrogate each and every one of its offices, ministries, administrations, houses, schools,
colleges, retreats, farms, and any properties in whatsoever province, realm, and jurisdiction and in whatever way pertaining to the Society. We do away with the statutes customs, usages, decrees, Constitutions, even those confirmed by oath, by apostolic approval, or by other means. We wish that the present document, as if corresponding word for word to all the Society’s privileges and indults, both general and special, fully and sufficiently does away with them even if the privileges were formulated with legal safeguards.

Therefore we declare that all authority in both spiritual and temporal matters of the Father General, the provincials, the visitors, and of any other superiors of the said Society is permanently discontinued and completely abolished. We transfer their jurisdiction and authority to the local ordinaries. We will expound below details concerning the manner, the persons, and the conditions of the transfer. We prohibit with this brief that anyone be admitted into the Society and take the habit of a novice. We forbid that those who have been received take simple or solemn vows under penalty of the nullity of the profession. Still further we wish, we direct, we order that those who are now in the novitiate be immediately sent away. And likewise we forbid that those who have taken simple vows but have not yet received holy orders be advanced to major orders under title of profession in the Society and of the privileges conferred on the same Society contrary to the decrees of the Council of Trent.

But our efforts are meant to provide some comfort and aid to members. For, as we wish to look to the utility of the Church and the peace of peoples, so we love paternally in the Lord individuals of this same order or its companions. We want them to be free from all quarrels, dissensions, and anguish with which they have been vexed to the present. We wish that they cultivate the vineyard of the Lord more fruitfully and benefit souls more richly. Thus members who have taken only simple vows and are not yet ordained are to have a period of time sufficient to find some suitable duty or a kind sponsor. The length of time is to be determined by the local ordinaries, but is not to exceed a year from the date of this present letter. Released from every bond of simple vows, they ought to leave the houses and colleges of the same Society. They will adopt the way of life that they judge in the Lord to be more suitable to their vocation, strength, and conscience. According to the privileges of the Society, such members could be dismissed for no other reason than that which Superiors thought more suitable to prudence and circumstances. No prior notice was necessary, no procedure, no judicial process.

To all ordained members we give permission and the faculty of leaving the houses or colleges of the Society. They may transfer to one of the regular orders approved by the Apostolic See in which they ought to fulfill the time of probation prescribed by the Council of Trent if they have taken simple vows in the Society. If they have taken solemn vows, they will be on probation for only six whole months on which matter we kindly grant them a dispensation. They may remain outside religion as secular priests or clerics. They will be under complete and total obedience and subjection to the ordinaries of those dioceses in which they fix their domicile. We decree further that to those, who remain in the world in this way, some suitable stipend be assigned from the revenues of the house or college where they were staying. This is to be done as long as provision from elsewhere has not been made, and account is taken of the revenues and obligations of the houses.
Provision for the professed who are already in sacred orders is as follows. The following may remain in the houses and colleges of the Society: those who are afraid of a substandard living due to the paucity or complete lack of funds or those who have no place to establish a domicile because of advanced age, poor health, or other just and grave reasons, and thus are not at all in a position to leave the houses and colleges of the Society. A condition of their remaining is that they have nothing to do with the administration of said house or college. They are to wear only the garb of secular clergy. They are to live fully subject to the ordinary of the place. We absolutely forbid that they replace those members who fall away or that they acquire a new house or any property according to the decrees of the Council of Lyons. They may alienate houses, articles, and property that they now have. Further, they will be able to be gathered in only one house or several, taking into account the number of companions who remain. The houses which they do vacate can be converted to pious uses as will seem right and proper according to the sacred canons, the will of founders, the increase of divine cult, the salvation of souls, and public usefulness for each place and time. In the meanwhile some member of the secular clergy who is endowed with prudence and an upright character will be designated as superior of said houses.

We declare that individuals of the said Society who are already in exile from their home provinces are also included in this general suppression of the Society. Accordingly we want the aforementioned exiles, even if they have been advanced to Holy Orders, to be ipso facto reduced to the status of secular clerics and priests and to be subject completely to the local ordinaries unless they transfer to another religious order.

If local ordinaries discern the necessary virtue, learning, and sound morals in those who have, by dint of this letter of ours, passed from the regular institute of the Society of Jesus to the state of secular priests, they will be able according to their judgement to grant or to deny the faculty of hearing the sacramental confessions of the faithful or of giving public sermons to the people. No one of them is to dare to perform these functions without written permission. The bishops and local ordinaries however are not ever to concede this faculty for ministering to externs to those who are living in the colleges or houses formerly belonging to the Society. To these we forbid for all time the administration of the sacrament of penance for externs and preaching. Our prohibition is like that of our predecessor Gregory X in the cited general council. Accordingly we impose a burden on the conscience of bishops. We desire them to be mindful of the very severe accounting they will have to make for the sheep entrusted 10 their care and the very harsh judgment with which the supreme Judge of the living and the dead threatens those who are over his sheep.

We desire further that those former Jesuits who were teachers of youth in letters and held a post in a college or school be able to continue in their teaching posts. All are to be completely removed from the direction, administration, and governance of the college. There should be a teaching post and the possibility for continuing only for those who offer some sign that good is to be expected from their
efforts and provided they distance themselves from the topics of debate and doctrine which are wont to engender very grave differences and difficulties due to their laxity or their stubbornness. Nor at any time are they to be admitted to the teaching position or are they to be allowed to continue their work if now engaged in it, if they will not preserve with their utmost efforts the quiet of the schools and the public peace.

We wish that whatever we determined for the suppression of the Society be applied to the sacred missions. We reserve to ourselves the establishment of means by which the conversion of infidels and the reconciliation of schismatics are to be facilitated and more surely attained.

While whatever privileges and statutes the oft-mentioned Society possessed are abrogated, we declare that its members, when they have left the houses and colleges of the Society and have been transferred to the state of secular clerics, are eligible to receive any benefices according to the decrees of the sacred canons and apostolic constitutions. The benefices may be with or without an apostolic responsibility. They are eligible for offices, dignities, personal posts, and other positions of the kind, all of which had been completely closed to them as members of the Society. Pope Gregory XIII of happy memory had excluded such offices in his brief of 10 September 1584 entitle Satis superque. We likewise permit them to receive a stipend for the celebration of Mass, which had been forbidden them. They may enjoy all the advantages and perquisites which as regular clerics of the Society of Jesus, they always had to do without. We likewise take away each and every faculty they had received from the Father General or other superior by way of privilege obtained from the Supreme Pontiffs. These privileges included: 1) reading the books of the heretics and other works proscribed and condemned by the Apostolic See; 2) not keeping fast days or not eating the usual fast day foods; 3) anticipating or postponing the recitation of canonical hours; 4) and other things of the sort which we very severely prohibit in the future. Our mind and wish is that they adapt themselves to the life-style of secular priests according to the common law.

We forbid anyone to delay the execution of this letter after it has been promulgated and made known. We forbid delay under any rubric, title, or pretext of any petition appeal recourse declaration or consultation on doubts, which might by chance arise. We exclude every pretext, foreseen or not. We want that immediately from this moment the suppression and cessation of the entire Society take effect, and that, under pain of excommunication to be incurred ipso facto, the disposition of all the Society’s offices be arranged in the form and manner we have laid down above. The excommunication is reserved to us and our successors, the Roman Pontiffs and is directed against anyone who has presumed to present an impediment, obstacle, or delay to this letter of ours.

In addition, we order and command in virtue of holy obedience that each and every ecclesiastical person, regular, diocesan, or ecclesiastic of any grade, quality, or condition, and especially those who had been enrolled among the members of the Society, do not dare to defend, attack, write about, or even to speak of the suppression and of its causes and motives. Likewise they are not to treat of the Institute of the Society, its rules, Constitutions, form of governance, or any other matter which pertains to the topic without the expressed permission of the Roman Pontiff. Similarly, under pain of
excommunication reserved to us and to our successors, we forbid all and sundry to use the occasion of this suppression to afflict and provoke anyone, much less those who had been members, by means of libel, reproach, contumely, or other form of contempt, whether orally or in writing, whether in private or in public.

We exhort all Christian princes to take measures within their powers to see that this letter of ours has full effect. The princes enjoy authority and power that God has given them for the defense and patronage of the Holy Roman Church. Then, too, they are led by obedience and devotion to this Apostolic See. Let them take pains and make every effort to see to it that this letter of ours has its full effect. Still more may they, embracing individual provisions in this letter, formulate and promulgate similar measures. Let them take care that while our will is being carried out, no quarrels, disputes, or dissensions arise among the faithful.

Finally, we exhort all Christians and beg them through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to keep in mind that we all have the same teacher who is heaven. We have the same redeemer by whom we were bought at a great price. We have all been reborn by the birth of water into the word of life. We are made sons of God and co-heirs with Christ. We are nourished by the same food of Catholic doctrine and the divine word. Finally, we are all one body in Christ, each fulfilling one or other role. It is necessary therefore that we be one, united by the common bond of charity and that we be at peace with all men. We owe no debt to anyone except that we are to love one another. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. We are to abhor offenses rivalries quarrels, attacks, and such disturbances thought up, invented, and fomented by the enemy of the human race in order to trouble the Church of God and to hinder the eternal happiness of the faithful. The devil fraudulently uses the schools of thought and even Christian perfection to stir up dissension. All should strive with all their strength to acquire true and genuine wisdom. St. James wrote about this wisdom when he asked (3:13-18) “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. Wisdom of this kind does not come from above but is earthly, animal, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, not judgmental nor insincere. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.”

Even if superiors and other religious of this order, as well as anyone interested or pretending to be interested in any way whatsoever in what has been herein ordered, do not agree to the present brief, it is valid. Though they were not summoned or heard, they are not to allege at any time faults of nullity, invalidity or defect on the basis of fraud, dishonesty, or the impossibility of execution. Law and custom do not avail against our provisions. Even if extreme harm ensues or some just, reasonable, and privileged cause is alleged which should have been expounded for the validity of these provisions, we forbid that the letter be censured, attacked, invalidated, or brought to court or into controversy. The letter is not to be subjected to terms of the law nor are remedies to be sought in law, fact, favor, or justice. No one is to seek concessions or favors whether in court or outside the court. But we want the
same present letter to be always and for ever valid, firm, and efficacious, and that it be allotted and maintain its full and entire effects and that it be inviolably observed by each and every person to whom it pertains or will in some way pertain in the future.

Ordinary judges and their delegates are to judge according to the provisions laid down here and not otherwise. Bound also are auditors of the apostolic palace and Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, even legati de latere, and nuncios of the Apostolic See, and others who exercise or will exercise authority and power. In all cases, the faculty of judging or interpreting otherwise than what is laid down here is taken away. If anyone knowingly or in ignorance happens to judge otherwise, we declare the decision to be null and void.

Apostolic constitutions and ordinances, even those issued in general councils, do not block these measures. Our rule is to be observed about not raising a question of law concerning said Society, its houses, colleges, and churches even if they are bolstered by an oath, apostolic confirmation or any other support from statutes, privileges, indults, and apostolic letters given to the Society, its superiors, its religious, and to any persons whosoever. The abrogation of privileges is valid no matter the tenor, the form, the cautionary clauses, and other decrees, even invalidating ones and no master how granted, confirmed, and renewed, even in a consistory. For each and every appeal, even if expressed in an adequate cautionary form and verbally conforming to the tenor of the brief, but not expressed in the same general clauses, we declare that the present document fully and sufficiently expresses our intentions and that the provisions will remain in force, other contrary views notwithstanding.

We wish that the present letter be handed over for publication under the signature of some public notary and the seal of some ecclesiastical dignitary. The same credibility is to be afforded it as to the original in or outside a court if the letter is used or is shown.

Given at Rome at St. Mary Major under the ring of the Fisherman. 21 July 1773, the fifth year of our pontificate.

Andrea Card. Negrone

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