



A Light Amidst the Modern Darkness

Introduction: A Letter That Still Resounds with Power

On March 19, 1937, on the solemnity of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church and Protector of the Redeemer, Pope Pius XI published a prophetic, vigorous, and deeply pastoral encyclical: **Divini Redemptoris**, “On Atheistic Communism and its Incompatibility with the Christian Faith.” In it, the Vicar of Christ issued a grave warning against the spread of Marxist communism, which had already revealed its most ruthless face in Russia and threatened to spread like a plague across the rest of the world.

Nearly a century later, this encyclical remains **strikingly relevant**. Communism, in its classic forms and in its new disguises under progressivism or “godless social justice,” continues to undermine the foundations of faith, family, property, and human dignity. Today more than ever, rediscovering **Divini Redemptoris** is a spiritual duty and a sure compass for those who wish to live the Gospel in an increasingly disoriented world.

I. The Historical Context: The Rise of the Red Shadow

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, atheistic communism established a totalitarian regime in Russia based on class struggle, the abolition of private property, the destruction of religion, and the suppression of all human freedom. Millions of Christians were persecuted, churches were destroyed, priests and laypeople were murdered or sent to gulags.

Pius XI was not blind to these horrors. In a Europe still marked by the economic crisis of the 1930s and the fear of communist expansion, the Pope raised his voice with apostolic strength. From the See of Peter, he denounced **the ideological error of Marxism**, which promised redemption without God, and offered the only true hope: Christ, the Redeemer of man.

“Class struggle, radicalized, reaches such an extent that it denies the right to property, destroys the family, and tears from the human soul all sense of religion” (Divini Redemptoris, n. 9)



II. Communism According to Pius XI: A False Redemption

Pius XI clearly understood that communism was not just a political or economic ideology, but above all an **alternative religious proposal**, a **“pseudo-religion”** that replaced God with the State, grace with ideology, and charity with class hatred.

This ideology was especially dangerous because it **offered an earthly, immediate redemption without the need for Christ**, and promised a kind of “socialist paradise” in exchange for eliminating everything that represented God and His Church. That is why the Pope’s condemnation was so strong: communism is not only wrong, **it is intrinsically evil**, because “by denying man his dignity as a child of God, it reduces him to a cog in the state machinery.”

“Wherever communism has gained power, it has attempted to destroy Christian nations with ruthless violence” (Divini Redemptoris, n. 15)

III. A Theological Judgment: Why Is Communism Incompatible with the Christian Faith?

From a theological point of view, communism is irreconcilable with Christianity for several reasons:

1. It Denies God and the Spiritual Dimension of Man

Atheistic communism stems from **radical materialism**, where neither soul nor eternity exists. This vision eliminates the transcendent dimension of the human being, reduces him to a mere economic animal, and turns him into a means, never an end.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds



| *from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4)*

2. It Destroys Inner Freedom

In the name of a false equality, communism subjects the individual to the State, denies religious freedom, censors conscience, and eliminates all dissent. This contradicts Christian teaching, which proclaims the **freedom of the children of God** (cf. Rom 8:21).

3. It Abolishes Private Property

The Church has always defended that private property is a natural right, allowing man to develop, be responsible, and share freely with others. Communism, on the other hand, sees property as structural injustice and promotes its violent abolition, depriving peoples of their sustenance.

| *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods” (Ex 20:17). This commandment protects legitimate possession and the fruits of one’s labor.*

4. It Promotes Hatred and Class Struggle

Communist doctrine encourages permanent conflict and confrontation between rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed. The Gospel, in contrast, calls for reconciliation, forgiveness, and universal brotherhood in Christ.

| *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God” (Mt 5:9)*

IV. The True Redeemer: Christ, Source of Justice and Charity

The solution to social evils cannot come from ideologies that deny God, but from a **Christian**



restoration of the temporal order. Pius XI insists that **Christian charity**, inspired by the Gospel, is the only force capable of building a just society.

The Pope calls all Catholics to commit actively to genuine social reform: one that respects the dignity of workers, promotes an economy at the service of the common good, and defends the poor—**without sacrificing truth or faith.**

“Christian justice must inspire and sustain the entire economic and social order” (Divini Redemptoris, n. 53)

V. A Call to Pastoral Action: What Can We Do Today?

Divini Redemptoris is not only a denunciation. It is also an **urgent pastoral appeal** that resounds today with renewed clarity. What can 21st-century Christians do in the face of the advance of atheistic, materialistic, and totalitarian ideologies—often disguised as “progress”?

1. Form Ourselves in the Truth

We must thoroughly understand the Church’s social doctrine, read documents such as *Rerum Novarum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, and *Centesimus Annus*, and form study and discussion groups that strengthen our faith and critical thinking.

2. Live Authentic Charity

Help the poor, yes—but not from an ideologized assistentialism, rather from **Christian love**, which sees in the other a brother, not a victim of the system. This also means supporting families in need, defending life, and offering time and resources generously.

3. Evangelize the World of Work

Catholics must be light in their workplaces, promoting justice, honesty, respect for human dignity, and rejecting all forms of exploitation or corruption.



4. Resist All Forms of Persecution

Today, many Christians are persecuted not by weapons, but by **ideological laws, cultural censorship, anti-Christian discrimination**. In these times, as Pius XI said, we must “have the courage of the martyrs” and not yield to fear.

“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Mt 10:28)

Conclusion: A Prophetic Document for Our Times

Divini Redemptoris is not a text anchored in the past. It is a **luminous prophecy** that shines brightly in the face of today’s challenges. When faith is marginalized, the family is destroyed, truth is censored, and human dignity is crushed by systems that promise redemption without God, **the Church’s voice—firm and maternal—reminds us that only in Christ is salvation found.**

Pius XI did not speak out of fear, but out of hope—the hope of a humanity renewed by grace. Today, that hope remains alive in every Catholic who chooses to live the Gospel with courage, fidelity, and love.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8)

To Deepen and Apply:

- **Read the full encyclical:** It is available for free on the Vatican website in various languages.
- **Organize a parish reading group** on the Church’s social doctrine.
- **Pray for persecuted Christians** in countries where communism or its derivatives still oppress the faithful.



- **Educate your children** in a Christian worldview that recognizes and rejects the false promises of secularism.
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If atheistic communism promises redemption without God, **the Church proclaims with power that there is only one true Redeemer: Jesus Christ.** And in Him, we can do all things.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7)