



In a world where truth seems to dissolve, where everything is relativized and faith is pushed into the private sphere, the encyclical *Humanum Genus* by Pope Leo XIII emerges with a prophetic clarity that is strikingly relevant today. Published in 1884, it is not merely a historical document: it is a spiritual diagnosis of a battle that is still ongoing.

This article seeks not only to help you understand this encyclical, but also to **discern your place within this spiritual combat**, through a deep, theological, and above all pastoral lens.

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## 1. Historical Context: A Church in the Midst of a Changing World

To understand *Humanum Genus*, we must situate ourselves in its time. The 19th century was an era of profound transformation:

- Political revolutions seeking a radical separation between Church and State
- The spread of rationalism and positivism
- The rise of secret societies, especially Freemasonry

Pope Leo XIII, endowed with remarkable theological insight, perceived that this was not merely about social change, but about a **deep spiritual crisis**: a struggle between two visions of man and the world.

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## 2. The Core of the Encyclical: Two Cities, Two Loves

Drawing inspiration from Saint Augustine’s work (*The City of God*), *Humanum Genus* presents human history as a struggle between two “kingdoms”:

- **The Kingdom of God**: founded upon truth, faith, grace, and obedience to God
- **The kingdom of Satan**: based on pride, rejection of truth, and human self-sufficiency

This is not a simplistic or conspiratorial view, but rather a **theological reading of history**: the human heart is always in tension between these two allegiances.



“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...” (Ephesians 6:12)

This biblical passage perfectly illuminates the spirit of the encyclical: **the battle is spiritual before it is political or cultural.**

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### 3. Freemasonry According to *Humanum Genus*: More Than an Organization, a Worldview

One of the most well-known aspects of this encyclical is its critique of Freemasonry. But it is essential to understand what Leo XIII is truly addressing.

It is not merely a specific institution, but a **system of thought** that promotes:

- Moral relativism (“all religions are equal”)
- The rejection of revealed truth
- The absolute autonomy of man without God
- The replacement of divine law with purely human laws

At its core, the Pope warns against an **anthropology without God**, where man becomes his own absolute.

And here lies the key: this way of thinking has not disappeared. Rather, it has spread in many forms throughout our modern culture.

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### 4. Relevance Today: We Are Living in the Midst of “Humanum Genus”

Although written over a century ago, this encyclical seems to describe our present reality:

- Truth is relativized (“everyone has their own truth”)
- Religion is reduced to a personal feeling



- Natural moral law is questioned
- God is excluded from public life

Today, one does not need to belong to any secret society to live under this logic: it is enough to **absorb the spirit of the world**.

Leo XIII invites us to recognize that the problem is not only external, but also **internal**.

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## 5. Deep Theological Foundations: The Drama of Sin and Grace

From a theological perspective, *Humanum Genus* rests on several fundamental truths:

### a) The Fall of Man

Original sin has wounded both intellect and will. Therefore, man tends to turn away from God.

### b) The Necessity of Grace

Without grace, man cannot attain full truth nor live in justice.

### c) The Centrality of Christ

Christ is not one option among many: He is the only Savior, the only way.

| *“I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)*

To deny this—even subtly—is to enter into the logic denounced by the encyclical.

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## 6. Practical Applications: How to Live *Humanum Genus* Today

This document is not only meant to be studied—it is meant to be **lived**. Here are some concrete keys:

### 1. Form the intellect in truth

Read, study, and deepen your faith. Do not settle for a superficial understanding.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Sacred Scripture
- Magisterial documents

### 2. Care for your spiritual life

The battle is spiritual; therefore:

- Daily prayer
- Frequent confession
- The Eucharist

Without these, it is impossible to resist the spirit of the world.

### 3. Discern the culture

Not everything that appears good truly is.

- Does it promote truth or relativism?
- Does it exalt God or the human ego?

### 4. Live with coherence

To be a Christian today requires courage.

- At work
- In the family
- In public life



It is not about imposing, but about **bearing witness**.

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## 7. A Pastoral Call: Not Fear, but Hope

At first glance, *Humanum Genus* might seem like a harsh document. But in reality, it is deeply hopeful.

Why?

Because it reminds us that:

- God remains Lord of history
- Evil does not have the final word
- Truth, though attacked, never disappears

The Christian does not live in fear, but in **active hope**.

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## 8. Conclusion: Which Side Are You On?

The great question posed by this encyclical is not political or ideological, but profoundly personal:

**To which kingdom does your heart belong?**

There is no neutrality. Every decision, every thought, every action brings us closer to God or farther away from Him.

*Humanum Genus* is not a text of the past. It is a mirror of the present and a compass for the future.

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## Final Prayer

Lord,  
grant us light to recognize the truth,  
strength to live it,  
and humility to follow You always.

May we not be seduced by error,  
but, firm in faith,  
be a light in the midst of the world.

Amen.