

Letter XLVIII of Pope Eugenius III to King Louis VII of France (1 December 1145)

Trans. by W.L. North from the edition of J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 180, (Paris, 1855), cols.1064-1066.

Bishop Eugenius, servant of the servants of God, to our dearest son, the illustrious and glorious king of the Franks and his beloved sons, the princes, and all of God's faithful located throughout Gaul, greetings and the apostolic blessing.

We have learned from the stories of old men and discovered written in their deeds, how much our predecessors, the Roman pontiffs, labored for the liberation of the Eastern Church. Indeed, our predecessor of happy memory, Pope Urban [II], sounded forth like a trumpet and took care to incite the sons of the Holy Roman Church from various parts of the world to its liberation. At his word, the Ultramontanes, and especially the strongest and strenuous warriors of the kingdom of the Franks and also those from Italy assembled ignited with the ardor of love, so that with the great assembled host and divine aid in their company, though not without shedding much of their own blood, they liberated from the filthiness of the pagans that city [Jerusalem] in which our Savior wished to suffer for us and in which he left the glorious sepulcher of his passion as a memorial for us, along with many, many other cities, which we will forego recalling so as to avoid prolixity. These cities have been held by Christians until our times by the grace of God and the zeal of your fathers who zealously defended them over the course of time and spread the Christian name in those parts insofar as their strength allowed, and other cities of the infidel have been manfully captured by them.

Now, however, since our sins and the sins of that people demand it, something has happened which we cannot utter without great pain and weeping: the city of Edessa, which is called *Rohais* in our language, a city which alone, as is said, served the Lord under the power of Christians when the whole land in the East was formerly held by pagans—this city has been captured by the enemies of the cross of Christ and many of the Christians' castles have been occupied. The archbishop of this city, together with his clerics, and many other Christians have also been killed there, and the relics of the saints have been given over to be trampled by the infidel and dispersed. In this situation, we both recognize and believe that it not hidden from your prudence how great a danger hangs over the Church of God and all of Christianity. For it is known that it would be the greatest sign of nobility and probity, if the things which the strenuousness of your fathers acquired, are strenuously defended by you, the sons. Nevertheless, if—God forbid!—it turns out otherwise, then the strength of the fathers is proven to have been diminished in the sons.

We admonish, ask and command all of you [vestram universitatem] in the Lord, and we enjoin upon you for the remission of sins, that God's men and especially the more powerful nobles, be girded manfully, and strive to attack the multitude of the infidel who almost always rejoice in the victory obtained over us, and strive to defend the Eastern Church, which was liberated from their tyranny with the great outpouring of your fathers' blood, and to snatch the many thousands of captives from their hands, in order

that the dignity of the Christian name may increase in our time, and your strength, which is praised throughout the entire world, may be preserved whole and undiminished. Let that Mattathias [I Maccabees 2] be your good example, who did not hesitate to expose himself along his children and relatives to death and to give up whatever he possessed in the world for the sake of preserving the laws of his forefathers. Finally, with the aid of divine assistance and after many labors, he and his family triumphed manfully over his enemies.

Since we, however, are looking out with paternal concern for both your rest and the abandonment of this same church, by the authority granted us by God we concede and confirm to those who decide out of devotion to take up and complete so holy and so necessary a task and labor that remission of sins which our aforementioned predecessor Pope Urban instituted. We further decree that their wives, children, goods and possessions remain under the protection of the holy Church, namely ours and that of the archbishops, bishops, and other prelates.

In addition, we forbid any case to be brought concerning anything which, when they received the cross, they possessed undisturbed, until one knows with the greatest certainty about their return or their death.

Furthermore, because those who fight for God should in no way concentrate on precious garments, on the cultivation of the appearance, on dogs or on hawks or other things which display wantonness, we admonish your prudence in the Lord that those who have decided to embark upon so holy a work, should not set their minds on party-colored or fur garments nor on gold or silver arms, but apply their zeal and diligence to such arms, horses, and all the rest of their powers, with which they will vanquish the infidels.

Now then, whoever are oppressed by debt and begin so holy a journey with a pure heart, let them not pay off past debts; and if they, or others in their stead, have been bound by interest payments, we absolve them by apostolic authority from their oath or promise.

Should they refuse or be unable to make payment, let them also be permitted to pledge their lands or other possessions freely to churches, ecclesiastical persons, or other trustworthy persons without any disapproval, after their relatives or the lords to whose fief these things belong, have been notified.

By the authority of omnipotent God and the blessed prince of the apostles Peter which has been granted to us by God, and in accordance with the institution of our aforementioned predecessor, we concede such a remission and absolution of sins, that he who begins and completes so holy a journey devotedly or dies there, let him obtain absolution from all his sins concerning which, with a contrite and humbled heart, he received confession, and let him receive the fruit of eternal repayment from the repayer of all things.

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