TO THE REVEREND CLERGY AND BELOVED LAITY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT LOUIS

GREETINGS!

It has come to our attention that a small group of individuals have signified their purpose of taking civil action to restrain us from carrying out a policy which we consider our right and duty as chief pastor of the faithful of this Archdiocese, regardless of race or nationality.

We realize that many of these good people are being gravely misled. Consequently, we take this occasion to remind them of their filial obligation as Catholics to cooperate with their Bishop and Clergy and their fellow Catholics in issues which are fundamental in our holy Catholic Faith, namely, not only the equality of every soul before Almighty God, but also obedience to ecclesiastical authority.

After mature deliberation, and fully confident of the loyalty of the faithful, we now deem it opportune to caution them publicly. By the general law of the Church, there is the serious penalty of excommunication, which can be removed only by the Holy See. This penalty is incurred automatically should an individual or group of individuals, without permission, in violation of Canon 2341, presume (that is, after full knowledge) to interfere in the administrative office of their Bishop by having recourse to any authority outside the Church.

We hereby direct that this letter be read at all the Masses on this the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost and Feast of Saint Matthew, September 21st.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+Joseph E. Ritter
Most Rev. Joseph E. Ritter
Archbishop of Saint Louis.

Dated at the Chancery Office,
September 20th, 1947.