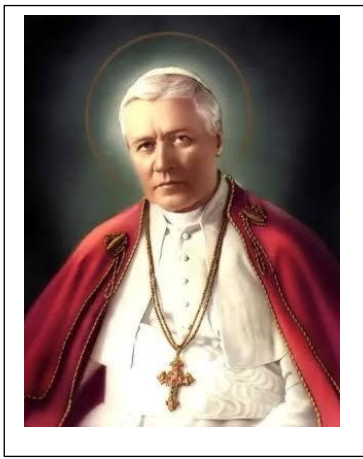




Saint Pius X , Pope

Pope Pius X (born **Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto**; 2 June 1835 – 20 August 1914) led the Catholic Church as Pope from August 1903 until his death in August 1914. He is remembered for his strong beliefs and for making important changes to Church practices and laws. He is honoured as a saint in the Catholic Church.

Pius X was very devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. His main goal as Pope was to "restore all things in Christ." He encouraged people to receive Holy Communion often and even lowered the age for First Communion to seven years old. This was a big change that lasted.

Showing his simple background, he wore a cross made of gilded metal on the day he was crowned. When his assistants were shocked, he said he always wore it and had no other. He was known for making papal ceremonies less grand. He also stopped the tradition of the Pope eating alone, which had been the custom since the time of Pope Urban VIII. Instead, he invited friends to eat with him.

When important people in Rome criticized him for not making his sisters, who were from a peasant family, papal countesses, he replied: "I have made them sisters of the Pope; what more can I do for them?"

He was known for being very friendly with children. He carried candy in his pockets for children in the streets of Mantua and Venice and taught them about their faith. During meetings with visitors, he would gather children around him and talk about things they liked. His weekly lessons for children in the Vatican always had a special place for them. He also decided that every parish should have a group to teach Christian lessons, partly to help children learn about their faith.

He was known for his humility and simplicity. He said he had not changed personally, except for wearing a white robe. His assistants often had to remind him not to wipe his pen on his white robe, as he used to do on his black one, which hid stains.

He made many changes to the Breviary.

He put a new focus on the Eucharist (Holy Communion). He said, "Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven." Because of this, he encouraged people to receive Holy Communion often. He did not allow the very old practice of giving Communion to babies. He also stressed the importance of going to Confession often so that Holy Communion would be received worthily. Pius X's strong belief in the Eucharist earned him the name "Pope of the Blessed Sacrament."

In 1910, he issued a decree called *Quam singulari*, which changed the age for receiving Communion from 12 to 7 years old. The Pope lowered the age because he wanted children to remember this important event and encourage their parents to be more religious.

He also tried to change papal ceremonies to highlight their religious meaning. For example, when he entered his first public meeting to create cardinals in November 1903, he was not carried above the crowds on the *sedia gestatoria* (a special chair) as was traditional. He walked in, almost hidden by the guards, to show humility.

In 1905, Pius X wrote a letter called *Acerbo nimis*. In it, he ordered that a group for Christian teaching (catechism class) be set up in every parish around the world.

The *Catechism of Pius X* was his idea for a simple, clear, and short catechism for everyone to use. It was used in Rome and parts of Italy, but not for the whole Church. This catechism was known for being "simple to explain and deep in content." Pius X praised it as a good way to teach religion in his 1905 letter *Acerbo nimis*.

The *Catechism of Saint Pius X* was published in Italian in 1908. An English translation is over 115 pages long.

Pius X published 16 encyclicals (official letters). One of them, *Vehementer nos* (11 February 1906), condemned the 1905 French law on the separation of the State and the Church. Pius X also confirmed the idea of Limbo in Catholic theology in his 1905 Catechism. He said that unbaptized people "do not have the joy of God but neither do they suffer... they do not deserve Paradise, but neither do they deserve Hell or [Purgatory](#)." On 23 November 1903, Pius X issued a rule that banned women from singing in church choirs.

In 1913, Pope Pius X had a heart attack and was in poor health afterward. He died on Thursday, 20 August 1914.