

EXCERPTS FROM THE EDICT OF NANTES (1598)

Henry, by the grace of God king of France and of Navarre, to all to whom these presents come, greeting:

Among the infinite benefits which it has pleased God to heap upon us, the most signal and precious is his granting us the strength and ability to withstand the fearful disorders and troubles which prevailed on our advent in this kingdom. The realm was so torn by innumerable factions and sects that the most legitimate of all the parties was fewest in numbers. God has given us strength to stand out against this storm; we have finally surmounted the waves and made our port of safety, -- peace for our state....

We have, by this perpetual and irrevocable edict ...establish and proclaim:

I. First, that the recollection of everything done be one party or the other between March, 1585, and our accession to the crown, and during all the preceding period of troubles, remain obliterated and forgotten, as if no such things had ever happened.

III. We ordain that the Catholic [Church] ... shall be restored and reestablished in all places and localities of this our kingdom and countries subject to our [rule]...in order that it may be peaceably and freely exercised, without any trouble or hindrance: forbidding very expressly [anyone regardless of class, wealth or title] ... from troubling, molesting, or disturbing ... [church officials] in the celebration of divine service, ... [or the collection of tithes, revenues and other rights due to them]: and that all those who during the troubles [took] ... possession of churches, houses, goods or revenues, belonging to [the Church shall return them]....

VI. And in order to leave no occasion for troubles or differences between our subjects, we [also permit Protestants to practice their religion] ... without being annoyed, molested, or compelled to do anything ... contrary to their consciences, . . . upon condition that they [adhere to all other conditions laid out in this edict].

XIII. We very expressly forbid [Protestants from practicing their religion outside] ... the places permitted and granted by the present edict.

XVIII. We also forbid all our subjects ...from carrying off by force or persuasion, against the will of their parents, children ..., in order to cause them to be baptized or confirmed in ... [either the Catholic or Reformed Church].

XXI. Books concerning the [Protestant faith] ... may not be printed and publicly sold, except in cities and places where the public exercise of the said religion is permitted.

XXII. We ordain that there shall be no difference or distinction made in respect to [religion] ... in receiving pupils to be instructed in universities, colleges, and schools; nor in receiving the sick and poor into hospitals, retreats and public charities.

Questions:

1. What was Henry IV's goal in issuing the Edict of Nantes?
2. What were some of the religious freedoms granted?
3. How did Catholics respond to this and why?
4. Why is this considered a landmark document?

Source: "The Edict of Nantes," The History Guide, accessed August 3, 2020, <http://www.historyguide.org/earlymod/nantes.html>