

**CATHOLIC CHURCH. POPE (1559-1565: PIUS IV).  
Catholic Church Pope (1559-1565: Pius IV) Papal  
bull regarding the exiled nuns of Syon Abbey, 1563**

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**Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Catholic Church. Pope (1559-1565: Pius IV).  
**Title:** Catholic Church Pope (1559-1565: Pius IV) Papal bull regarding the exiled nuns of Syon Abbey, 1563  
**Call Number:** Manuscript Collection No. 068  
**Extent:** 0.1 cubic ft. (1 oversize folder)  
**Abstract:** Contains one papal bull issued by Pope Pius IV regarding the exiled nuns of Syon Abbey.  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.

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**Administrative Information**

**Restrictions on Access**

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**Citation**

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**Processing**

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## **Collection Description**

### **Biographical Note**

The Abbey of Syon was established in 1420 at Isleworth, Middlesex on the bank of the Thames River. It was the only Bridgettine house in England. The enclosed community was a double monastery of both men and women, and it maintained a reputation for enlightened and austere piety. The Abbess governed the Order while a Confessor-General, elected by the brethren, controlled the spiritual direction. The monastic buildings were arranged so that the Sisters had their own convent on one side with the Brothers on the other side. A church, situated between the two groups, served both communities but preserved separate enclosure within. The Sisters sang the Bridgettine Office of Our Lady alternately with the Brothers' Hour of the Divine Office.

Although strictly enclosed, the brethren, many of whom were university graduates, were influential as confessors, by their writings and by preaching to pilgrims who came for the "Pardon of Syon" at Lammastide. The Order followed St. Bridget's rule of poverty fervently. Each year before All Souls Day, the monastic accounts were examined, bare provision was put aside for the coming year, and the entire surplus of money or food was given to the poor on All Souls Day.

In 1539 all Catholic monastic orders were suppressed due to their resistance to Henry VIII's religious policy. Several Syon scholars were put to death because of their support of Elizabeth Barton. Of all the English monasteries only Syon refused to surrender. Although much of the community dispersed in 1539, Sister Catherine Palmer, who later became Abbess, led a group of nuns to the Netherlands. The community moved from place to place until they settled in Lisbon in 1594. For the next three centuries the monastery maintained its existence despite great hardships. In 1861 the Order returned to England where they settled in South Brent in Devon. The Abbey of Syon has the distinction of being the only English religious community founded in medieval times that has maintained an unbroken lineage to the present.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Issued July 7, 1563 by Pope Pius IV, this papal bull is addressed to all the Christian faithful but is particularly directed to the Archbishop of Utrecht and others who might assist the community of Bridgettine nuns in exile from Syon Abbey. The Pope wrote of the Abbess Catherine and the trials she and the nuns were enduring. He offered a variety of spiritual concessions and indulgences to all individuals who had helped the Syon community in their time of distress.

