

He said to him : Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee (JOHN XXI., 15.) and the Lord confided to him the care of his sheep and of his lambs, that is to say, of the entire Church, faithful and pastors.

When Jesus-Christ had ascended to heaven and the Holy Ghost had descended upon the apostles, Peter was the first to speak and he converted several thousand men to the faith.

He punished with death Ananias and Saphira, who had been guilty of hypocrisy and miraculously cured a large number of sick. He at first settled at Antioch ; was cast into prison and delivered by an angel. He presided over the Council of Jerusalem and finally went to settle definitively in Rome.

The prince of Apostles had governed the Church of Rome for twenty-five years when Nero's persecution broke out. The faithful pressed the head of the Church to fly, but when at their urgent prayers, he was about to leave Rome, he had a vision in which Jesus-Christ appeared to him. Peter asked him : « Whither goest thou ? » « I am coming to Rome, » the Saviour replied, « to be crucified again ! » Peter understood the meaning of these words, returned to Rome, was captured and thrown with saint Paul into the Mamertine prison, whence they were withdrawn, to be taken to the place of their martyrdom. Saint Peter asked, out of humility, to be crucified head downward. His request was granted ; he was bound with cords and fastened to the cross with nails like his Master. Saint Paul's head was cut off. This glorious martyrdom took place on the 29th June of the year 65.

What a strange destiny is Peter's ! What marked contrasts, what conflicting recollections are united in his name ! An obscure fisherman from the obscure country of Galilee, an apostate, a fugitive, become the head of the Church, the common father of the faithful, the conqueror of pagan Rome, the master of the earth, greater than Augustus, who was called in his lifetime through the adulation of his people, a tutelary divinity. These are truly useful teachings and thus does God raise, support and reward those who follow and love him !

What a charm there is in looking over the whole of this life so full of strong and gentle lessons !