

The gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church, because it is founded on the rock Peter ; but they could prevail if the rock could be shaken or broken by error. The commission given to Peter to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ's flock clearly implies the gift of infallibility. We cannot suppose that Christ would have committed His flock to a shepherd who would lead them astray or desert them when danger threatened. Besides, we find that our Lord positively assured Peter that his faith would not fail : " Simon, Simon," said our Lord, " behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not ; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren." St. Luke, xxii., 32-33.

Our Lord foresaw that the Church would be assailed by the most bitter persecutions ; that it would have to encounter the most tremendous trials ; and in order to enable it to withstand both the one and the other, He prayed that the faith of Peter might not fail ; in other words, He prayed for the infallibility of Peter in order that he, endowed with this august prerogative, would confirm his brethren, that is, the universal Church.

Peter, therefore, ever living in the Church in the person of his successors, is its supreme and œcumenical pastor, and is endowed with the sublime gift of infallibility in his official teaching.

Such, dearly beloved brethren, are the great prerogatives conferred upon the vicar of Christ ; such is the exalted position assigned to him ; and this is why we take so profound an interest in all that concerns him, and why in all our doubts and perplexities we turn to him with the docility and confidence of children for his guidance in the road to eternal life.

And how faithfully and gloriously the Popes have discharged the duties of their high office ! Of the thirty Popes who occupied the Chair of Peter during the Roman persecu-