

THE CROSS



Jesus said to his disciples. Whom do you say that I am!

Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answering, said to him. Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona. because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my father who is in heaven. AND I SAY TO THEE. THAT THOU ART PETER, AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

AND I SHALL GIVE TO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven. and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven. S. Matthew xvi. 15-19.

Was anything concealed from Peter, who was styled the Rock on which the Church was built, who received the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the power of loosing and binding in Heaven and on earth? — PETERLIAN Præscrip. xii.

There is one God, and one Church, and one Chair founded by the voice of the Lord upon Peter. That any other Altar be erected, or a new Priesthood established, besides that one Altar, and one Priesthood, is impossible. Whosoever gathers elsewhere, scatters. Whatever is devised by human frenzy, in violation of the Divine Ordinance, is adulterous, impious, sacrilegious. — St. Cyprian Ep. 43 ad plebem.

All of them remaining silent, for the doctrine was beyond the reach of man, Peter the Prince of the Apostles and the supreme herald of the Church, not following his own inventions, nor persuaded by human reasoning, but enlightened by the Father, says to him: Thou art Christ, and not this alone, but the Son of the living God. — St. Cyril of Jerusal. Cat. xi. 1.

Calendar.

- APRIL 22—Sunday—II Sunday after Easter SS Suter and Caius PP M doub.
- 23—Monday—St George M sem.
- 24—Tuesday—St Fidelis of Sigmaringa M doub.
- 25—Wednesday—St Mark Evang doub II class.
- 26—Thursday—SS Cletus and Marcolinus PP MM doub.
- 27—Friday—St Anastasius I P C doub.
- 28—Saturday—St Xystus I P M doub 6th inst supp comm of S. Vitalis M.

Poetry.

THE HYMN FOR EASTER SUNDAY.

O filii et filia.

Ye sons and daughters of the Lord! The King of Glory, king ador'd, This day himself from death restor'd.

All in the early morning grey, Went holy women on their way To see the tomb where Jesus lay.

Of spices pure a precious store In their pure hands those women bore To anoint the sacred Body o'er.

Then straightway one in white they see, Who saith "Ye seek the Lord; but He Is risen, and gone to Galilee."

This told they Peter, told they John; Who forthwith to the tomb are gone, But Peter is by John outrun.

That self-same night, when out of fear The doors were shut, their Lord most dear, To His Apostles did appear.

But Thomas when of this he heard, Was doubtful of his brethren's word; Wherefore again then comes the Lord.

"Thomas, behold my side," saith He; "My hands, my feet, my body see, And doubt not, but believe in Me."

When Thomas saw that wounded side The truth no longer he denied; "Thou art my Lord and God," he cried.

O, blest are they who have not seen Their Lord and yet believe in Him! Eternal life awaiteth them.

Now let us praise the Lord Most High, And strive His Name to magnify On this great day, through earth and sky:

Whose mercy ever runneth o'er; Whom men and angel hosts adore, To Him be glory evermore!

COMPITUM;

OR,

The Meeting of the Ways at the Catholic Church.

THE ROAD OF YOUTH.

Continued.

Independently, therefore, of its peculiar adaptation for the reception of the pious spirit, youth is also drawn to the Church by the peculiar force of its general character; for as in the natural forest it loves to strike into the shaded intricate by-paths, leaving the main way, with its seats of stone alongside, for the common herd of its elders; while for a moment's rest it is content with the first trunk it finds lying across the path, like ancient Romans, as the poet says, not being suffered by its laws to despise the fortuitous sod,

"Nec ortusum spornoro respitem Leges ansbant."

so, in passing through the labyrinth of life, it is easily won by the many little humble paths— "Soft—as the melody of youthful days, That steals the trembling tear of speechless praise"—

which the Church has marked out for it, as if with an especial view to the peculiarities of its nature, feeling the truth of what the poet says—

"Simul ac duraverit ætas, Membra animumque tuum, nabis sine cortice;"

or, the truth of what our greater bard affirms—

"If we are nature's, these are ours,—these To our rose of youth do rightly belong."

Though it may be difficult to seize the distinct character of each of these secret paths of youth, or to trace the consequences of following them to their source, the difficulty of obtaining elsewhere the beautiful views which they command, and the same facility for advancing delightfully towards the supreme desirable bourn, becomes every day more painfully discernible; for as a late French historian mournfully complains, the old expression, he remained always bon enfant—adding, petit mot, grappe chose—is hardly any longer understood. No one, at the present day, wishes to be either like a child or good. This last word is an epithet of derision.

But let us for a moment try these lesser paths of accordance with the spirit which the Church diffuses. Iter est non trita auctoribus via, nec qua peregrinari animus eruditus expetat, and therefore leaving the company of the grave, permit me, while noticing the puerile and fugitive impressions of the spring of life, to put on, as it were, the dress of a boy, as indicative of the mind which is required to taste their charm.— "Imitemur," as Gerson says, "parvulorum simplicitatem de parvulis locuturi."

"Simplicitatis quam cara Deo, quam gratæque divis A teneris exactis annis sine labe juvenat."

This forms part of that amiable unconsciousness which constitutes the great beauty of youthful manners, while the despiser of Olympus, the hairy Polyphemus, with his long beard, affects in every gesture to strike others with an impression of his greatness, studying constantly to be imposing, et componere vultus, and thereby rendering his own advance more and more difficult. "Great folly is it," says Philippe de Commines, speaking of the bad effects of the interview between Louis XI. and the King of Castille, "for two princes who are equal in power to see each other, unless when they are in their youth;" and what does not end in folly which is begun or pursued with a mind that disdains the wisdom of a child! This path of youth winds round the obstruction caused by the false wisdom of the mature in age. Self-interest, pride, suspicion, and ambition, are all left like so many stiff trunks on one side or other, while the track leads us sweetly over the soft soil so favourable to the reception of truth, characterised by those features which the philosopher ascribes to the young—saying, "æqualibus delectantur, fabellarumque auditione ducuntur—animadvertuntque ea, quæ domi sunt, curiosius." Homer distinguishes the general motive of youth in all movements, when he remarks that the younger men all followed Telemachus, their equal in years, through love. How near then to wholesome influences must the road of youth conduct us, though at this stage we should only meet

* Ode 11, 19. † Hor. Sat. 1. 4. ‡ De trahend. parv. ad Christum. § Cæsa Jesus Puer. iv. ¶ De Finibus, lib. v. 15. † Qd. iii. 363.

with followers like the Cadmeans, Kentores cippor: or one, as Horace says, inter æquale equitans! Again, this road leads us far from the contagion of sophistry, which completely shuts out every view of the central glory that reveals itself to youth; for by dint of explaining good it no longer causes enthusiasm, and of analysing evil,—it no more causes indignation. All these thorns and weeds are cleared away before young feet, and therefore the ancient moralist observes, "non sine causa... quas dixi, in pueris virtutum quasi scintillis, videmus, equibus accendi philosophi ratio debet, ut eam, quasi Deum, ducent subsequens, ad naturæ perveniat extremum." The ancients were deep and penetrating in the judgments which they formed of minds by the external expression of countenance, and movement of the body.— And were we to agree with them, we might conclude from merely observing the gait of those we meet upon the road of youth, that it was a happy end towards which they were advancing.

If we admit the accuracy of an observation made by St. Bonaventura, we shall be inclined to recognize lovers of the Catholic philosophy, from merely remarking the steps and movements of the young; for "they who walk," he says, "with long steps, as they generally do, are probably magnanimous and efficacious; but he who, going quickly, compresses himself and urns his face aside, and involves his whole body in timid, sparing, and cunning. He who takes short steps in going quickly, is said to be malignant and weak." But let us remark something that will appear less fanciful. When Buffon was writing his treatise on man, he was so impressed with a sense of the delicacy of his organisation, and of the mystery of its force, that he became afraid even to stoop to take up a pen, so that he used to call to a servant to give him any thing that dropped. This was a state of mind evidently far from the direct road to the true spirit of man, in accordance with the will of his Maker, who seems to have secretly provided for his being disposed to act, both morally and intellectually, with a certain impulse, and with an energy exceeding that which would result from the judgment and calculation alone, without which impulse or elasticity the knowledge of truth itself has a tendency to make us not only err as moralists, but to become, as philosophers, ridiculous and insane. Now in the way of thought, as in that of action, youth acts conformably to nature; whereas often mature men seeking to know all, and to take nothing on trust like the young, but to examine and weigh every thing with two earnest solicitude, blind themselves by excess of scrutiny, and fall into the bottomless pit of incredulity and madness, suspicion working with their jealousies, given birth to fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle, as Paulina says, for girls of nine. Youth thinking and acting, as it were, with a spring, is able to clear barriers which these men, incumbered with so many fond provisions, find to be insurmountable. It is content, catholically, to wait for higher knowledge, and to repose in patience and love and admiration on the grace which it receives, without questioning or resisting its truth. Again, as if following the poet's observation—

"trahit sua quemque voluptas"

the Church in regard to youth, seems to act at all times; since for every passion and almost fancy of the young she has devised some sanctified attractions.

* Il. iv. 391. † Car. i 7. ‡ Cicero de Finibus, v 15. § Compend Theolog Veritatis lib ii c 58. † Virg. Ecl. ii 65.

"In youth we love the darksome lawn, Brush'd by the owl's wing. Then, twiligh' is preferred to dawn, And autumn to the spring."

Who needs to be told that for such tastes the Catholic Church has, in her forests, vast and varied provision! Her hermits' cells, her discipline, and the solemn festivals of the closing year, suggest themselves at once. If the author of the little poem entitled Rural Architecture, had been familiar with the tastes of the young who have ever had a glance at Catholic objects, he would have found other little enterprises of that kind for his youth, besides building a giant on the peak of the crag, and calling him Ralph Jones. To raise little altars, crosses, and oratories on their friendly spots would please them more.

To take the nests of birds would never give the pleasure that the young have found in curbing cruel sports, when reminded by sweet holy fathers of the innocent childhood of their Saviour; as when Cæsa represents Him intervening to save a nightingale from the hands of three lads, wandering in a green solitude, to whom He says—

"O pueri, teneros haud fas convellere nidos, Atque suos matri per vim subducere fœtus, Quos illa instruit ad cantus; nam deinde solutus Illi etiam linguæ, cantu memora avia mulcent."

St. Francis meeting a boy who had caught some doves which he was about to sell, asked him to give them to him. The lad immediately complied with his request, upon which the seraphic father, who set him to work to make nests for the doves, foretold that he would one day become a blessed friar in his order. This lord of folded arms is practically humble, and that too without knowing it. "The young are of no consideration in the world," says the Pere de Ligny, "and they do not desire to be of any; while servants obey them, they in their turn obey every one; and, in fact, dependence is their natural state, and hence our Lord requires us to imitate them—immense effort for human nature, which only loves to command."

Thus by nature youth is prepared for the great lesson of St. Jerome, "Bonum esse obedire majoribus; et non uti præceptorum pessimo; mirum præsumptions sui," and for imitating that marcus, disciple of the abbot Sylvanus, who justified the preference his master showed him, in presence of some aged hermits, by leaving his cell at the abbot's call, when he was employed in writing, without waiting to finish the letter O. If any should come up to them who are secretly following youthful influences, and indiscreetly abstract the avenues of faith, like Pharisees, with a Dic nobis, quid tibi videtur, they may reckon with certainty on being referred for their solo answer to the sentence of an authoritative promulgation.

All this explains why the Church lays such stress upon the cultivation not alone of puerile manners, but also on whatever seems favourable to them in every period of life, so as even to condemn the custom of wearing, as if for defiance, that superabundant hair which Lycærgus used to say rendered ugliness more terrible.

"Barba rassa," says a commentator on the rule of St. Benedict, "puerilis simplicitatis æque innocentia nos admonet;" all were to indicate puerile innocence; so that Rupertus uses the title admonitio ad pueros, meaning, as he says after

* Jesus Puer. † Speculum vite S. Francisci, c. 77. ‡ Hist. de J. C. § Regula Solitariorem ap. Luc. Holst. Codex Reg. lii. ¶ Hæreticus Ecclesiarum Mense. lib. v. 9.