

LEAGUE OF THE SACRED HEART.

General Intention For June.

(Named by the Cardinal Protector and blessed by the Pope for all Associates.)

FILIAL SUBMISSION TO THE VICAR OF CHRIST.

Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

Filial submission to Our Holy Father the Pope, that is, to the Vicar of Christ, the successor of Peter, such is the General Intention for which all members of the Apostleship are to pray during the present month.

Nothing is more bitterly impugned by those outside of the pale of Christ's Church, and especially by those who, during the last half century, have drawn nearer to it by outward ceremony and ritual, than the great underlying dogma of Catholicity, the Supremacy and Infallibility of the Roman Pontiffs. And yet, as a scriptural fact, nothing stands out with clearer outline in the pages of Holy Writ, than that our Lord instituted a society with a central, infallible authority, as a bond of unity and as a guarantee of infallibility in doctrine, whose duration was to be coeval with the world.

This supreme teaching and governing authority, which is fixed in the See of Peter, is the central power which, by its splendor and influence, gives light and motion to the other subordinate ecclesiastical authorities and holds all the parts of the Church strongly united together as one regular and harmonious system. Every ecclesiastical body that sunders its connection with this centre of unity ceases to belong to this system; it becomes a wandering star (Jude i, 13), moving in deviant tracks, and growing more and more obscure and languid as it recedes further from the central source of light and action.

From the earliest ages the Bishops of Rome, as successors of St. Peter, have been acknowledged as the supreme rulers on earth of the whole Church of Christ. They have in all ages exercised an acknowledged spiritual jurisdiction, as of divine right, in every part of the Church, whenever the state of affairs called for the exercise of their authority, in order to preserve unity in faith and in ecclesiastical government, and to enforce, in all nations, the observance of the law of Christ.

We said that it was a scriptural fact that Christ established a living infallible authority to endure for all time to come. Now this promise of infallibility in teaching with infallibility in action—Christ was the Son of God and Author of all truth—find its accomplishment in every past age as in the present. No religious body ostensibly teaching in Christ's name can be the perpetuation of the Church which Christ established if it falters in its claim to infallibility.

It is an undisputed historical fact that the Holy Roman Catholic Church alone has always claimed this divine prerogative in virtue of the words of her Founder. Her Holy Doctors and authorized teachers have always pointed to the Pontiff who occupied the See of Peter as the infallible expounder of Christian truth. In our own century, the Vatican Council, that is, the assembled Bishops of the Universal Church, relying on scriptural grounds and the constant tradition of all preceding ages, proclaimed as a dogma of faith the Infallibility of the Pope.

That Christ abides with the teaching body of the Church, taken in its complexity, that is, Peter together with the other Apostles, Peter's successor and theirs, and thus assures the infallibility and completeness of their teaching, be it in the remotest nation of the earth, and to the end of time, is manifest from the promise He gave and the commission they received on the mountain of Galilee after His resurrection: "And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying: All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (St. Matt. xxviii, 18-20.)

Here was a commission which far exceeded the strength of eleven poor fishermen. The memory even of the most gifted of mortals, humanly speaking, could never have been equal to the task of recalling all that Jesus had done for the instruction of the Apostles, nor all His lessons and admonitions; for St. John tells us in the closing words of his gospel: "There are also many other things which Jesus did: which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written." But the Master had already fully provided for this, and made sure of their recalling all He had taught them: witness the promise in His last memorable discourse before His passion. This promise bore not only on the past, but on what was to come, to aid them in their teaching: "These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I have said to you." (St. John xiv, 25, 26.) "I have yet many things to say to you; but you cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of Truth is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak: and the things that are to come He shall show you." (St. John xvi, 12, 13.)

These powers were further confirmed, after the resurrection, as we see in St. Mark: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

In consequence of this divine commission, St. Paul, speaking of the body of the faithful, guided and governed by the Apostles, was able to proclaim it "the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii, 15); and our Lord Himself gave us to understand what was to be thought of those who would turn a deaf ear to her teachings and admonitions: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me;" (St. Luke, x, 16.) "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." (St. Matth. xviii, 17.)

Such, briefly, are the scriptural titles of the Church on which are grounded her claims to infallibility, all of which refer as well to Peter as to the other Apostles. But to Peter was given a distinct and special commission: he was to be Prince of the Apostles, source of spiritual jurisdiction, and infallible guide to teach and confirm not only all the Bishops of Christ's Church, but the great body of the faithful as well, throughout all ages and in every clime.

It is impossible to dissociate two remarkable passages in the New Testament, both of which refer to Peter as the immovable foundation on which Christ built His Church, viz., verse 42 in the I chapter of St. John, and verses 17, 18, and 19 in chapter xvi, of St. Matthew. The former describes the first meeting of our Lord with Peter: the second, the laying of the great foundation-stone of Christ's Church.

Let us go back, in fancy, two thousand years, and witness these events. The time had come when the Redeemer was to enter upon His public career. Our Lord had journeyed alone from Galilee—He had as yet no followers—and He had reached the spot in Bethania, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. Down the slope of the river's brink flocked the multitude of the Baptist's disciples, and among them Andrew, Peter's brother. And, lo! "the Stranger, who had come, He, the beautiful above the sons of men" (Psalm xlv, 3). His features radiant with the divine majesty, not to be limned by mortal hand, stood there upon the bank. He was among them and they knew Him not. John alone felt the inspiration, and hailed Him with words that struck awe into the wondering crowds: "Behold!" he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." And marvels follow: the marvel of Christ's self-abasement—His insistence on being baptized by the hand of His creature, and the marvel of the Eternal Father glorifying the Son of man. The heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descending as a dove came upon him. "And behold a voice from Heaven, saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (St. Matt. iii, 17.)

From that moment Andrew casts his lot with the Master, but as we are told by St. John (i, 4), "he findeth first his brother Simon, and said to him: We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And He brought him to Jesus. And Jesus looking upon him, said: Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted, Peter," that is to say in our own language a rock.

It would be derogatory to the divine foresight of the Redeemer to suppose that it was without an all-wise purpose that He changed the name of Simon to that of Peter. Now the only other event which could give significance to this proceeding, and not leave it bald, unmeaning ceremony, is that which followed Peter's profession of belief in the divinity of His Master.

It was at Caesarea Philippi, beyond the Waters of Jerom, not far from the sources of the Jordan, where stands the modern town of Paneas, in the great valley between the converging ranges of the Anti Lebanon and Hermon, that the divine promise was formally given to the world of an everlasting Church. Our Lord had already wrought many stupendous miracles, but, judging from the injunction laid upon His disciples immediately after the event we are about to consider, the multitudes were not yet prepared to accept Him as Jesus the Christ. Still they must have made many surmises as to what manner of prophet was He who had come among them. But for His immediate followers, those the chosen ones, it was time to test their belief.

And Jesus asked His disciples, saying: "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" But they said: "Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Jesus saith to them: "But whom do you say 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 will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." (St. Matt. xvi.)

These words were addressed to one alone of the twelve—to Peter, as a re-

ward for his unflinching profession of faith. And from them we glean that he is the rock whereon the imperishable Church is to be founded; that he is, moreover, to hold the keys, symbolic of the power of so decreeing that Heaven itself necessarily ratifies his enactments.

Lost the scandalous incident of the triple denial of his Master by Peter should in the least weaken in our estimation the force of this promise, it will be well to bear in mind that Christ foresaw the wretched fall of His apostle; that He alluded to it more than once; and that, in the very act of carrying out His promise, when He finally invested Peter with so august a dignity and so exceptional an authority enhanced with newly added prerogatives as its complement, He exacted from him a solemn reparation.

It is not necessary to dwell on the words of the Master whereby He foretold that Peter was to deny Him thrice; but there is another allusion to it when Christ, after chiding the Apostles for striving "amongst them, which of them should seem greater" (St. Luke, xxii, 24). He, in the same breath, predicted Peter's conversion and intimated to the others that it was to Peter they should look for direction and guidance.

"And he said to them: The kings of the gentiles lord it over them; and they have power over them, are called benefactors. But you not so: but he that is greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth. And I dispose to you, as my Father has disposed to me, a kingdom: that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom: and may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said: Simon, 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, 25, 26, 29, 32.)

And now we come to the last and most solemn act. This was after the Resurrection, and the Apostles had already been comforted by two previous apparitions of our Lord, during which He had conferred on them the power to forgive sins. Six of the disciples had followed Peter, the fisherman, to the Sea of Galilee, and had toiled the night throughout, but had caught nothing. And when morning broke, as they lay off the shore not far from Tiberias, they saw a stranger standing on the bank, who accosted them:

"Children," asked He, "have you any meat?" They answered him: No. He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship; and you shall find it. They cast therefore: and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: it is the Lord. Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the ship (for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them: Bring hither of the fishes which you have caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three. And although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them: come and dine. And none of them who were at meat durst ask Him: Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them and fish in like manner. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to His disciples after He was risen from the dead.

"When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He saith to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he had said to him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. He said to him: Feed my sheep." (St. John, xxi, 5, 17.)

Though Peter had denied his Lord thrice, at the other apparitions Jesus had not reproached him with this faithlessness. He was conscious enough of his guilt, and he recalled his sincerely meant but presumptuous boast, that even if all the others were to deny Him, he would never do so—nay, he was ready to go with His Master, both into prison and unto death. (Luke, xxi, 33.)

And now the Master had asked him if he loved Him more than these. He dared not say so, but had appealed to the divine insight of the Searcher of the heart and reins (Ps. vii, 10): "Thou knowest that I love Thee." So when Jesus questioned him a third time, he felt the gentle reproach implied, and was filled with sorrow and confusion as he recalled to mind his threefold denial of the One he loved: so much so, that the sublime commission with which Jesus then and there was entrusting him, all-fraught with privileges greater than erring man had ever been invested with, was received not only without a feeling of elation, but would seem to have been absolutely unheeded as it came upon him.

On this last passage from St. John, Cardinal Wiseman makes the following terse but conclusive comment: "The

unrestricted commission to feed the entire flock of Christ implies a primacy and jurisdiction over the whole. For the commission to feed is a commission to govern and direct. In the oldest classics, such as Homer, whose imagery approaches the nearest to that of Scripture, kings and chieftains are distinguished by the title of "shepherds of the people." In the Old Testament, the same idea perpetually occurs, especially when speaking of David, and contrasting his early occupation of watching his father's flocks, with his subsequent appointment to rule over God's people. It is a favorite image with the prophets to describe the rule of the Messiah, and of God, over His chosen inheritance, after it should be restored to favor. And our Blessed Redeemer Himself adopts it, when speaking of the connection between Him and His disciples—His sheep that hear His voice and follow Him. In the writings of the apostles we find, at every step, the same idea. St. Peter calls Christ "the Prince of Shepherds," and tells the clergy to feed the flock which is among them; and St. Paul warns the Bishops whom he had assembled at Ephesus, that they have been put over their flocks by the Holy Ghost, to "rule the Church of God."

Peter, therefore, or the legitimate occupant of his See, rules over an infallible, infallible Church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail—a Church commissioned to teach all nations, with which, while teaching, Christ is to abide to the end of time—a Church which the Holy Ghost is to teach all truth: so that it becomes its very pillar and ground—a Church empowered to exact obedience: whose utterances none may despise without despising its Divine Founder, and becoming a heathen and a publican—a Church whose teaching, when accepted, ensures salvation to the baptized, and when rejected, entails damnation.

Such is the Church over which Peter rules; and he rules in such a way, that its teachers, whether individually or collectively, have no commission to impose their belief or decrees upon him, but have to look to him for confirmation in their own doctrine and belief.

This is the teaching of the whole assembled Church, of the Vatican Council, ratified by Peter's successor: "We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals: and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irrefragable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church. But if any one—which may God avert!—presume to contradict this Our definition: let him be anathema."

Since, then, the Sovereign Pontiff, as Peter's successor, is infallible every Catholic is bound to accept his teaching under pain of being severed from the Church. Submission should be yielded to the Vicar of Christ in all matters purely religious. It should be yielded even in matters political religious; i. e., which are partly of the domain of faith and morals, and partly dependent on the State. The individual is not competent to determine how far the jurisdiction of the Church extends; neither is the civil power. But since Christ has instituted an authority which is infallible in the domain of faith and morals, it stands to reason that this authority must be equally infallible in determining what matters come within this same sphere of faith and morals. In such questions the decision of this authority is paramount.

"It is clear," wrote Cardinal Manning, "in answer to Mr. Gladstone, that the civil power cannot define how far the circumference of faith and morals extends. If it could, it would be invested with one of the supernatural endowments of the Church. To do this it must know the whole deposit of explicit and implicit faith; or, in other words, it must be the guardian of the Christian revelation. Now no Christian, nor any man of sound mind, claims this for the civil power. If, then, the civil power be not competent to decide the limits of the spiritual power, and if the spiritual power can define with a divine certainty its own limits, it is evidently supreme. Or, in other words, the spiritual power knows with divine certainty the limits of its own jurisdiction; and it knows therefore the competence of the civil power."

Consequently, when the Sovereign Pontiff clearly commands us to obey, in any matter which he determines to be a question of faith or morals, whatever may be our personal views to the contrary, we may be certain that he is acting within the limits of his jurisdiction, and that our bounden duty is to bow to his authority. There are, however, cases when the Pope does not exercise the plenitude of his doctrinal authority; and at such times his utterances are not infallible. But even then it would be rash to prefer one's own judgment to that of the Supreme Teacher of God's Church.

But filial submission goes further than this. The Pope is truly the Father of the great family of the faithful, and Catholics, as dutiful children, should not pause, to discuss the mandates of their Father. Their obedience should anticipate his slightest wishes, knowing that they are loved by him,

and anxious in turn to show their affection for him.

We shall soon have an opportunity of testing the sincerity of our protestations of filial attachment to the Sovereign Pontiff. We have at present in our midst his accredited envoy. Canadian Catholics are awaiting Rome's decision on a question of vital importance for the future of religion in this great Dominion; and it is to be hoped that neither party ties nor any other worldly consideration will stand between us and our duty to Holy Church and the Vicar of Christ.

Every Associate of the League, we are sure, will fervently pray, during this month of the Sacred Heart, that our filial submission may be made manifest to the whole Catholic world.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! through the most pure Heart of Mary, I offer Thee all the prayers, work and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in reparation of all sins, and for all requests presented through the Apostleship of Prayer: in particular that all Catholics may be animated with a filial submission to the Holy See. Amen.

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