

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. 16-19.



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? — TERTULLIAN Præscrip. xxii. "There is one God, and one Church, and one Christ 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 ad mortuus, 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.

Calendar.

- FEBRUARY 1—Thursday—St Ignatius B M Doub.
2—Friday—Purification of the B V M Doub II cl.
3—Saturday—St Dionysius P C Doub sup com St Blasius B M.
4—Sunday—Septuagesima, Sunday semid.
5—Monday—St Agatha V M Doub.
6—Tuesday—Prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ great Doub sup comm St Dorothy V M.
7—Wednesday—St Romuald Abbot Doub.
8—Thursday—St John of Matha C Doub.
9—Friday—St Zozimus P C Doub comm St Apollonia V M.
10—Saturday—St Scholastica V.
11—Sunday—Sexagesima Sunday semid.
12—Monday—St Telesphorus P M Doub.
13—Tuesday—Comm of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ grt Doub.
14—Wednesday—St Agatha P C Doub sup comm St Valentine.

COMPITUM;

on,

The Meeting of the Ways at the Catholic Church

Last over the long line of eastern hills peeps the first faint smile of morn; and we take our way beneath the forest's solitude, intending to survey life's varied wandering and the many ways through which the mind of man is led to discern the bright citadel of truth, whither as to a central point all wishes tend, while still opposing passions and external wiles are leading it astray; and as a woodman when he comes into the thick-grown forest of Ida casts his eyes on every side to determine the spot where he will first begin to labour, though he has abundant supply on all sides, so do I look around through this immense and intricate region to fix upon a point of departure where our observations may most advantageously commence. Perhaps we should be guided in the first instance by the natural order of time, and take the instance of childhood's views as presenting the first of these avenues, through which the soul is lovingly invited to pass with right intention in a straight and happy course to its glorious and eternal end. Sweet is the announcement that we enter on the road of children. Even in the natural forest it can attract, like that of Fontainebleau, by its desired fountain, its rock of the two sisters and the friendly hill. The spirit's first amaze on entering this probationary wilderness is a theme removed beyond our investigation; we only know that it is expressed in cries.

As we advance, joy and fear are the first impressions, as if caused by the sublime silence and the solitary horror of an umbrageous forest, and all that chequers the phantasmal scene that floats before our eyes in wavering light. When Hagar, after wandering with her child in the wilderness of Bersabee, at length, when the water was exhausted, laid him under a tree, and withdrew a short distance not to see him die, and lifted up her voice and wept, we read that God heard the voice of the boy. The cries of infancy are thus heard by Him who understands best what they signify. They mean, we may easily suppose, what the good St Julian, Archbishop of Toledo, says so beautifully of himself, "Blind and weak, from the desert Idumea, I seek my eternal country, Jerusalem. Therefore stretch I forth my hands to thee suppliant that I

* Gen xxi.—The Road of Children.

may be led in safety, and preserved from the dangers which infest the way.

The starlight smile of children, answering the sweet looks of women, suit well the murmur here of the unrepeining brooks—

And the green light, which shifting overhead Some tangled bowers of vines around mo shed.

Let us follow them, sleeping in arms ere the end of each day's wandoring, watched over by bending angels, who kiss their little hands, and weep perhaps when on their candid brows anxiety would write to-morrow.

In all ages, men of observing and contemplative mind have been struck with the mysteries of childhood. 'Facile est hanc cernere in primis puerorum actatibus,' says Cicero, 'quamquam enim vercor ne nimius in hoc genere videas; tanem omnes veteres philosophi ad incunabula accedunt.' The Persians, indeed, so far from studying infants in the cradle, would not even see their own children before they had attained their seventh year; in order, said they, that they might not grieve if they should lose them early; but with the mysterious affinity between childhood and whatever was most divine in human thought, the whole ancient world seems sufficiently impressed. The stern Stoics themselves, seem on the point of dissolving at the image of the grace of first youth, which they styled the flower of virtue.

Cicero appeals to the testimony of children to prove the justice of what he has laid down, to show 'Omnia hausta e fonte naturæ;' and Plato in his laws pursues the same line of argument. 'If children,' he says, 'be taken for the judges here, would they not declare in favour of this opinion!—would not the suffrage of the young be given so—?!' Fortitude and a horror of injustice, say Roman authors, can be learned from Cato's questions when a child, seeing the heads of the proscribed in the hall of Sylla, and asking Tarpedon his tutor why there was no one to kill the tyrant. 'What more admirable!' exclaims the Pagan historian; 'the boy did not fear the conqueror in his presence. If Marius had been in his place, he would have thought more of flight than of achieving the death of Sylla.' Hence, in the judgement of the ancients, the dignity of the task which consisted in developing the faculties of childhood, as when the poet says—

'Hoc quoque te manet, ut pueros elementa docentem Occupet extremis in vris baba senectus.'

And, in fact, whenever nature was not systematically opposed, all history attests the influence exercised by children. Sergius Galba was about to be condemned, when the sight of his little children weeping moved the Roman people to acquit him, mercy, not equity, deciding the case: the acquittal, which could not be pronounced on the score of innocence, respectui puerorum data est. Similarly Aulus Gabinius, having only the licitor and the dungeon before his eyes, owed his deliverance to the interest excited by the view of his son prostrating himself at the feet of his accuser.

Some few of the Pagan philosophers themselves seem to have felt 'how solemn a thing it is to keep company with little children, so lately arrived, as it were, out of another world and from God's neighbourhood, who are now in that wonderful state, as a modern author says, where in we were once, and did not, alas! comprehend it, till it had slipped away from us.' They

* De Finibus, v 20. † Val Max. ii. ‡ Diog Laert. § De Finibus, i. ¶ De Legibus, lib. ii. ** Hor Ep i 20. †† Val Max viii. ††† Faber.

seem to have recognized, in other words, that there are avenues to truth naturally opening at the first steps in human life, through the sensibilities and undeveloped intelligence of the child. But not to linger at our first setting forth amidst the darkness of heathenism, let us observe how prodigiously these mystic avenues were widened and multiplied, when the darkness of paganism, with its obstructions and delusions, had passed away, and left the forest wholesome.

The Catholic religion invests childhood with the sweetness and sanctity of a religious mystery, placing it in the number of those which men contemplate as joyful on the beads; and hence the new device of love to succour infancy, in France is called, not the cradle, but the crib, as if each new babe by the choice which the Church reckons on in its baptism, was really another Christ.

Taking our way over heathy paths through the vast shade of a strange forest, if by chance we meet some little lusus and inquire from him the distance to a given point, he will probably represent it as farther than an older person would represent it to be from the place which we have reached; but in this moral wilderness the parties will exchange answers, for to the early age of man, the way to his true centre is the nearest. In life's first walk, as in the gardens of Armida, blossoms and fruit abound at the same time: grace seems to be the act of nature herself, so exquisitely the wild and cultivated united.—Marina de Escobar, when only three years of age, used to be heard repeating, 'I love God more than my father, and mother, and sun, and all things else;' and she used to place herself in secret corners of the house, or field, and say, 'that she would find God, who was her life, in solitude.'

Thus did she kneel, lisping sacred names And looking, while her hands and eyes Are lifted to the glowing skies, Like a stray babe of Paradise, Just lighted on the flowery plain, And seeking for its home again!

A child born of Catholic and pious parents in a land of faith, is like guileless Adam in the groves of Paradise—

On! the joy Of young ideas, painted on the mind In the warm glowing colours fancy spreads On objects not yet known; when all is new And it is lovely: he looks around, and Lo, as if return'd to Eden bowers, every thing is very good.

For all things are seen with the redeeming light of Christ's cross and passion. Wherever he lifts his eyes the holy cross or other symbol of our faith, presents its gleam or shadow, and as the poet wishes, mingles with his dreams, drawing him up by silent power to the felicity of heaven.

History relates that a father obliged to leave his child often in its cradle, used to put in its hands to amuse its eyes some flowers, the child loved to consider these odoriferous and varied forms; but the first impressions exercised on it a slow and mysterious action, which only increased with age, and this child which played with flowers became the celebrated Linnæus.—Thus does the perfume which escapes from the symbols, manners, and minds of catholicity, insinuate itself into the young heart, and diffuse in it secretly the divine germs, which later expand with the warmth of faith into the beauties of a serene and holy existence. Truth comes to it in the persons of venerable and beloved priests, inclining to the lowest child of Christ the fruits from Heaven's third height themselves have won, in the smiles of its mother, in the sound

* Vt Ven Virg. Marius de Escob p 13.

of the cheerful or solemn bells, in every thing that it sees and hears; for though the sense of divine things is so profound, that one may dig for ever without coming to the roots, their fruit is so near as that we have not to raise our arm to gather them. Thus nourished are those first affections, those shadowy recollections, which, be they what they may, are yet the fountain light of all our subsequent days; which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour, nor all that is at enmity with joy, can utterly in after-life abolish; for the heart loves them to the last, whatever intervenes between us and our childhood's sympathy, still reverting to what first caught the eye. The young stranger accepts from the Church whatever she presents to him—

— Dona parentis

Miratur, rerumque ignarus, imagine gaudet. The child that cannot tell what he would have, will kneel and hold up hands for fellowship; and then, exclaims a recent poet, what a look is that! 'When fresh from sleep with lips of artless modesty and joy, it lips a hymn not understood by its own self, but dutefully learnt in simple faith.' He cites a child that sung the Alma Redemptoris, and then adds—

'This Latin knew he nothing what it said; For he too tender was of age to know; But to his comrade he repair'd, and pray'd. That he the meaning of this song would show, And unto him declare why men sing so.' But children often know more than they themselves suppose; and well might the French poet say, 'Let us not silence those sublime voices—let us leave those children on their knees—we have need that childhood should pray thus for us all.' 'I remember,' says Marina de Escobar, 'that when I was a little girl, and did not know what was meant by mental prayer, I used to consider with great emotion the mysteries of the life of Christ.'

'I call education,' says Plato, 'the virtues shown by children when the sentiments of joy or sadness, of love or hatred, which rise in their souls are conformable to order, without their being able to render an account of it; though when reason comes to their aid, they can render an account of the good customs to which they are formed, and it is in this harmony between custom and reason that virtue consists, as the Zumpsonia Zumpsona men, arete. The Christian philosophy proceeds on the same principle which the profoundest wisdom of the ancients thus anticipated. Such is the dignity and joy of childhood's faith, which manhood's wisdom needs to keep alive, a spirit of wandering simplicity, that is delighted with all the types it finds on earth of heaven, and which maturer wisdom has only to ratify and admire; as even a poet in his wandering lost, is able to recognize, exclaiming—

'O sweet morning dream, I pray, Pass not with the matin hour; Charm me: heart and tongue allay. Thoughts that ache, and eyes that lower. From the fountain to the shrine Bear me on, thou trance divine; Faint not, fade not on my view, Till I wake and find Thee true.'

'Qui mane vigilans ad me, invenient me.'—In the house of all other princes, continues Antonio de Guovara, it is the custom never to open to early visitors, but persons must come at noon, whereas this verid shows us that those who would transact business with Jesus Christ, should repair to Him at the dawn of their exist-

* Etudes sur les Idees. † Morris. ‡ Æn. viii 730. § Vit. Ven. Virg. Marina de Escobar, l. ¶ De Legibus, lib. ii. ** Lyra Innocentium.