

During all the period of that active ministry—the three years in which “He went about doing good,” calling his Apostles, instructing his disciples, healing the sick, restoring the dead to life, converting sinners, &c.—it was his custom to withdraw to the mountains or other retired places to pray; and his Apostles he admonished to “always pray,” informing them that certain evil spirits could be cast out and banished, *only* by “prayer and fasting.” On the night before his passion he prayed with great anxiety and earnestness, preparatory to the terrible trials of the morrow, to which he foresaw he should be exposed; and he warned his apostle in the garden to “watch and pray lest they fall into temptation.”

Thus our Divine Lord not only teaches and exhorts, by oft repeated precept, his followers to pray, but also gives us the example of his own personal recourse to this sacred duty of praying to God at all times but especially in afflictions and temptations.

In the eleventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read that after the martyrdom of the apostle St. James, St. Peter was also arrested and kept in prison, by order of Herod, to be put to death to please the Jews.

“But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church for him,” (verse 5). God sent his angel to deliver St. Peter from chains and prison; while of his wicked persecutor, King Herod, we read near the end of the same chapter:

“And forthwith the angel of the Lord struck him * * * and eaten up by worms he expired,” (verse 23).

Such was the efficacy of the prayers of the Faithful in obtaining the deliverance of St. Peter the first Pope—such the terrible chastisement with which God punished the persecutor of the Pastors of His Church, especially her Chief Pastor!

Now, what happened in the early history of the Church, as above related, has in her subsequent history, happened over and over again, and has been renewed even in our own days. We might cite well known facts of passing history to illustrate this, but we prefer to proceed with our special subject, without entering the field of secular or political history.

Our Lord tells us: “The servant cannot be greater than the master,” (Matt. x. 24). As Christ was treated so shall be his followers. He was infinite goodness and yet he was calumniated, insulted, persecuted unto death—even the most ignominious of deaths! But then followed the glory of his resurrection, his triumphant ascension back again to Heaven, the descent of the Holy Ghost to complete and perfect the establishment of his Church, the miraculous success of her first Pastors, the Apostles, notwithstanding all the persecutions to which they were so often and so unjustly subjected.

As it was with Christ so must it ever be with his church. Her history is a series of alternate trials and triumphs. She is the

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