

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

General Intention for January, Named and Blessed by the Sovereign Pontiff.

Father Faber opens his beautiful conference on Confidence in the only Worship by asking, What has God done that His creatures do not trust Him, and how is life to be lived without confidence in Him? It is true He has in some sense loosened his hold upon us, but it is only for a while. He will take us up again. We are going back to Him. There are but two eternal homes; one or other of them is inevitable. But one is rather an endless end than a home. We cannot fly or hide from Him. What shall we do, if we cannot trust Him? Yet confidence in God is far from common, and an adequate confidence most rare.

We hear and read often about faith and charity, but there is seldom mention of the beautiful virtue of hope. True, she is not cut off from her two theological sisters; but on account of the middle place she holds between them, we pass her by, not paying her that particular consideration she deserves. And yet without hope there is no Christian life. It is to the latter, what the sturdy trunk is to the tree. It draws from the root of faith the living sap, distils it, purifies and strengthens it, and then blossoms forth in richest foliage bearing the flowers and fruits of charity. It feeds them too, and lifts all up to God. A life without confidence in God is low and grovelling, losing itself in the pleasures of the world, or sunken in the passions of the flesh; it is hardened and selfish, of the earth, earthly, without God in this world.

The Christian life is a supernatural life, its end being to unite us to God as He has revealed Himself from heaven in His Son, Christ Jesus, "the only begotten in the bosom of the Father," who hath declared Him to men. But how can we reach God thus supernaturally known through faith in Christ? Mere knowledge is not enough. Besides the understanding, the will, with its love, its desires, aspirations, efforts must be borne up to God and united to Him. "Who" says David "will give me the wings of a dove, and I will fly and I will rest." The soul rests in God, her sovereign good, by charity; but she flies to Him on the wings of hope—a divine virtue, a lifting power infused into the heart through the immediate action of the Holy Ghost. By an infinite stretch of condescension, as if bending down from the heavens, God stoops to His rational creatures, places Himself in touch with their faculties and yokes to them His perfections—His goodness, power, mercy—by His word of promise sealed with an oath. "Wherein God, meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath: that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold the hope set before us. Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth even within the veil. Where our forerunner Jesus is entered for us, made a high priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." Here we have in the sublime language of the Apostle, a detailed description of the flight of the soul to God borne on hope even within the veil. Jesus, the Mediator and High Priest forever, is the anchor of the Christian soul, cast into the ocean of the Godhead, grappling unto it all the divine perfections, making "firm and sure" our entrance, no matter how tempest tossed amid life's trials and temptations, if only we hold fast to the anchor chain.

Now it is precisely the office of confidence to make us thus cling to God, who offers His perfections and word of promise, to be the mainstay of our desires. For though His promise stands firm and true, and "heaven and earth may pass away, but His word shall never pass away," yet it is in our power to reject His proffered help. It shall not do violence to our liberty nor force itself upon our free-will. We may reject it altogether, or in

part, turn away in despair or doubt and hesitate and waver, discouraged by the difficulties that beset us or attracted by earthly and perishable goods.

What has not God done to win our confidence! In the crib of Bethlehem, we see Him on Christmas night shorn of the terror of majesty, of the glory of His infinite perfections, clad in the garb and attractiveness of a babe, while the Church sings in the language of St. Paul. "The grace"—that is the goodness and kindness—"of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men that we should live looking for the blessed hope." The very Gospel is defined by St. Paul to be an "access with confidence to God." God himself vouchsafes to seem as if He made a boast of His fidelity, Scripture repeating over and over again, "For God is faithful," as if perpetually calling the attention of His creatures to it.

No wonder God should treat the loss of confidence, the total rejection of His goodness and mercy, as in one sense the greatest of all sins. Ultimate despair is the one irremissible sin. "the sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall be forgiven neither in this world or in the world to come." Both Peter and Judas had received the grace of Apostleship; both sinned; both repented; the latter even unto the full restitution of his ill-gotten silver. How was it that one became a saint and the foundation stone of God's church, and for the other it had been better "he were never born?" Because Peter had trust in the mercy of Jesus, but Judas fell into despair. The number of suicides in our days is a sign that sins against the Holy Ghost are ever on the increase. Without going to this extreme it can be safely said that want of confidence in God is the cause why so many live on sinning and put off their conversion from day to day; why many who aim at perfection never reach it; why many more yield to temptation and fail to form habits of prayer and virtue. On the other hand there is nothing that trust in Him cannot achieve. Absolute trust in Him is precisely the faith that moves mountains and works miracles. The measure of God's answers to our prayers is the measure of our confidence in Him whilst we pray.

Every Christian is obliged to make an explicit act of hope together with faith and charity at least, according to grave theologians, once a month. Good Christians make them every day. Confidence in God, however, is something more than a transient act; it is rather an habitual disposition of the heart influencing the whole of our religious life. Likewise all the practices and experiences of the Christian life concur to engender confidence in our soul. The more we think of God and study Him and converse with Him and act for Him, the easier will it be to confide in Him. In other words confidence is acquired by practice.

This practice especially belongs to prayer. A real believing prayer is by no means common; and this is why such an immensity of prayer is unanswered. "Let him," says St. James, "ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Again we must extend this practice to everything which happens to us. All the events of life, all the things of this outer world must come under its influence. In a much greater degree must our trials, temptations, duties of state, difficulties be brought under the benign sway of animating confidence in God. Difficulties are the stones out of which all God's houses are built; confidence is progress.

It is in periods of great trial, intense suffering, overwhelming affliction, for ourselves or those who are dear to us, and especially in seasons of persecution for God's Church, that the virtue of confidence in God shines out with brightest perfection. "Then God conceals His power and seems to abandon us; when he closes His eyes on the dangers that menace, and His ears to our prayer; when He leaves promises which are never realized, and holds out hopes to

which all seems to give the lie; when bragging unbelief mocks the simplicity of the faithful and asks with derision, where now is your God? when the crowds run and fall prostrate before the idol of the hour, and the small number of true adorers daily dwindles—then to stand firm, to cling to and trust in the divine promises, despite lying appearance, to wait all the day for the Lord and see Him with the eyes of faith through the surrounding gloom, to say with Job, abandoned on the dunghill; "even if I die I will hope in Him," is the pledge of confidence which God demands from his friends to whom He reserves in eternity the richest recompense.

Thus was it with His disciples on the lake when "there arose a great storm and the waves beat into the ship, so that the boat was covered, but he was asleep." They came and awaked Him saying; "Lord save us, we perish." Why should they have lost confidence when Jesus was with them in the ship? He was but trying them and He rebuked their want of faith: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

A great advantage of our Apostleship is the spirit of confidence which it breathes into our prayers. It unites them together by association, and above all, ties us by another link to the "Anchor of the soul, firm and sure," which imparts to our souls its own perfection, and to our prayers its own efficacy entering "even within the veil where the forerunner, Jesus, is entered for us."

We shall begin the new year by supplicating for the Church an increase of confidence in God, that the prayers and lives of all may be animated with such a precious virtue and disposition.—J. J. C.

NO PLACE FOR LADIES.

John B. Gough, the famous temperance writer, was a lover of a good story and told an anecdote well. He was likewise exceedingly earnest at times, and when in the mood did not like the introduction of levity into his discourse. Once in a New England town he was lecturing, and after painting the tavern as a place of contamination even for the abstainer, asked:

"Don't you all agree with me, friends, that there is no place a man should go and of which he should tell his mothers and sisters, unless he might take them, too, there? Should there be any such place?"

"Oh, yes!" came drawlingly from a rear seat.

The audience was roused from its spell of admiration for the orator, and turned to look at the owner of the voice in the rear. Gough smiled as though he thought no discussion possible, and blandly asked:

"Where, friend, would you go, telling mother and sisters, but refusing to take them?"

"The barber's," was the laconic reply.

THE EDITOR'S SWEET REVENGE.

A rural editor tells the following story in a spirit of ghoul-like glee:

An editor who died of starvation was being escorted to heaven by an angel who had been sent out for that purpose, says the Findlay (O.) Courier. "May I look at the other place before we ascend to eternal happiness?" "Easily," said the angel, so they went below and skirmished around, taking in the sights. The angel lost sight of the editor and went around hades to hunt him up. He was found sitting by a furnace, fanning himself and gazing with rapture on a lot of people in the fire. There was a sign on the furnace which said: "Delinquent Subscribers." "Come," said the angel, "we must be going." "You go on," said the editor, "I'm not going. This is heaven enough for me."

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