

THE FIRST POPE.

SEARCH OF THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ST. PETER, THE PONTIFF SELECTED BY OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR.

No name can ever be of more interest to the Catholic mind than that of St. Peter. We know that many of the Popes have been enrolled in the calendar; thirty have sealed the faith of Christ; with their blood. Some have stood high above the doctors of their age for knowledge and learning, while all have exercised an influence amongst the nations on the side of liberty and civilization. We find amongst them men like Gregory VII. and Innocent III. who elevated the masses and paralyzed the tyranny of kings, and others after the fashion of Benedict XIV., who gave an impetus to science, learning, and the arts that has left the impress on the history of Europe and the world.

But, nevertheless, to the figure of the first memorable Pontiff the Catholic mind ever turns as the first link that binds the Church to its Divine Founder, and what is human in it, to the eternal and supernatural. Those great powers and privileges with which Christ endowed His Church were first placed in the hands of St. Peter, and through him conveyed to the Christian world. He is the only Pontiff that was educated in the Apostolic College, and learned from the lips of his Divine Master those truths that have transformed human life and passion.

St. Peter's life might well be divided into two parts by the biographer: the first his preparation amongst the disciples of St. John and our Saviour for his great destiny; the second begins with the first feast of Pentecost and continues to his crucifixion in Rome in 67. St. John the Baptist had charge over the novitiate that prepared for the public mission of our Saviour. Amongst the novices we find the future Pontiff. A native of Bethsaida, that city on Lake Genesareth which was frequently blessed by the presence of our Divine Redeemer, he evidently possessed that longing for knowledge of the unseen world that, developed by years of association with his Master, was the source of his vocation. When called by our Saviour to the Apostolate he hesitated not to cast aside even those few links that bound him to the world.

Once he had embraced this life of sacrifice he became the Apostle of faith and love. The gospel narrative proves that he was regarded by our Lord from the beginning with special favor and affection. Cardinal Newman thinks that it was for the love of Christ, flowing on as it did from its spontaneity and exuberance into love of the brethren, that he was chosen to be chief pastor of the fold. "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" was the trial put on him by his God; and the reward was, "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep." It was for this reason that St. Peter was selected by our Saviour to take the place at the helm to guide the Church after His Ascension.

The two prerogatives with which our Saviour endowed St. Peter as head of the Church were primacy of jurisdiction and personal infallibility. To him with the other apostles He gave the power of absolution from sin and of offering sacrifice. He enjoyed equally with the other disciples the right of preaching the Gospel. But besides and beyond all those powers he received in common with the other apostles, we find that he is specially chosen as their head. To St. Peter alone did our Saviour say: "And I say to thee, 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 shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." We see that St. Peter is the "rock" on which the Church was to be built, and that to him were to be given as the sign of the power he was to exercise "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Besides he was the only one to whom Christ gave individually the power of "binding" and "loosing" which implies the power of making laws and dispensing from them. And it may be interesting to add that the charge of "feeding the lambs and sheep" refers to the right of teaching and ruling not only the faithful but the priests and bishops of the "kingdom of heaven" with which he was endowed.

The principle of infallibility. It will appear very strange that outside the Church so much difficulty is found with the doctrine of Papal infallibility unless we take into consideration the immediate consequences of such belief on the conscience. The principle of infallibility is the cardinal point of Christianity. It preserves and alone is capable of preserving Divine revelation. Hence no man could excuse himself from acting dishonestly if he did not join the Church once he admits the dogma of infallibility. Yet if the powers entrusted to St. Peter for the guidance of the faithful be honorably examined, it is impossible to see what our Saviour could mean unless He bestows infallibility. Besides what has been quoted above, we find our Saviour promising to confirm his faith so as to be beyond all the wiles of Satan. "Satan has tried to sift thee as wheat; but I prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not; and thou, being converted confirm thy brethren." This office of confirming the brethren attached to the primacy to which St. Peter was elected by our Saviour demands personal infallibility for its proper and effectual fulfillment. ST. PETER'S DENIAL AND REPENTANCE. One act in this portion of St. Peter's life must not be forgotten. It will serve to show still more clearly the divine character of Catholic faith. It is his great sin of denial. Yet it produced two good effects. One is, it shows the weakness of the instruments which our Saviour made use of to convert mankind; the second, the extraordinary repentance of St. Peter. Tradition tells us that channels were worn

on the face of the apostle by the continuous tears of bitter sorrow he shed for his act of dishonor. Does it not also teach us the efficacy of contrition and the infinite mercy of our Saviour to those who are really in earnest in co-operating with His grace?

THE FIRST DAYS OF THE CHURCH. St. Peter began the active work of his Pontificate on the first day of Pentecost. The advent of the Holy Ghost produced wonderful efforts in the little room of Jerusalem. Previously fearful of the terrors of the Sanhedrin, and suffering from the loss of their Divine Leader, they, now having received the Holy Spirit of God, went out boldly into the streets of Jerusalem to preach Christ crucified. St. Peter planted that day the standard of Catholic faith in the very heart of Jerusalem, which, as our Saviour promised, has never yet been borne down. The first fruits were three thousand souls. The apostle presided at this great work, and according to the acts of the apostles personally baptized them.

In these days of labor we find St. Peter performing those acts of jurisdiction that belonged to his office as Pontiff. He was the first mover in the election of a new apostle in the room of Judas Iscariot; he was the spokesman of the rest as we have seen on the day of Pentecost; and he it was who answered the charges when the apostles were brought before the council; he is the chief actor in the tragic scene of the death of Ananias and Sapphira; he was the first to break down the wall of prejudice of race by receiving a Gentile convert into the Church; he was the first to propound in the Council of Jerusalem the question to be discussed as to the Mosaic observances; and finally, we find them acting as president at that council in 49. From this forward his life is one of constant labor and work in many portions of the world, converting thousands by his preaching, and suffering innumerable persecutions from the enemies of Christianity. In 42 he took up his residence in Rome, and from that city kept up constant communication, as far as possible, with the workers in the ministry. Bishops received their instructions from him, and were encouraged by his extraordinary zeal. In Rome itself innumerable evidences of his labors could be traced. The very stones speak of the work of the Supreme Pontiff, and bring back the mind in wonder to the time when the great Catholic Church, that now has temples and churches and millions of adherents in every land, was in reality the "little mustard seed" of which our Saviour speaks.

THE LAST TRAGIC SCENE ON THE VATICAN HILL. In Rome the last tragic scene in St. Peter's life took place. It was a scene, too, worthy of the great Pope. The enemies of the Church viewed his success with horror. Nothing could daunt his courage or his zeal. The Christians had grown numerous, and threatened the superstitions of the pagans. Sleeping in security for centuries, their rites and dogmas were so corrupt and ridiculous as to tempt the cynicism even of the infidel. Hence the authorities seized St. Peter, and with him St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, threw them into prison and condemned them to death. On the Vatican Hill this great Pontiff suffered persecution for the love of his Divine Master. One great feature of that death teaches us the humility of St. Peter. Crucifixion was the form of death he was to suffer. Lest, however, his sacrifice for faith might seem too like that of his Master, he requested that he should be placed on the cross with his head hanging downwards to the ground. And so, by his last act, he crowned the work of his life as Pope. He had spent the first seven years at Antioch, and the remaining twenty-five at Rome. When he was dying, he must have felt happy at the result of his work. From the increase of numbers and the zeal with which, by God's grace, he inspired the Christians, he never feared that the Church would succumb to the long, bitter night of persecution that was destined to fall upon it in the Roman world. He was amongst its first victims. And his blood crying to heaven for the success of the Church he was privileged to rule undoubtedly obtained grace and strength and gave courage to those who had later on to face the full power of the storm that Satan raised to destroy his work.

HIS LIFE LIKE THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. The life of St. Peter is not unlike that of the Church. With the powers of the world against its influence on the souls of men every year and generation brings with it an ever-increasing harvest. No country that sees its light receives the blessings of faith without persecution. The reason was not far to seek. The doctrines of Christ are opposed to the lower passions of men. The powers of hell are ever on its path. But so long as we have men inspired by the zeal and example of St. Peter, its power for good must ever grow. In other words, since the promise of our Saviour to be with His Church extends to the "consummation of the world," successors of St. Peter will ever be privileged with those supernatural gifts that must preserve it intact against ever difficulty and obstacle. And, through the special blessing of our Saviour, that day shall come when the work begun on the day of Pentecost will be completed, and all men shall be united under the "one fold" and the "one Shepherd."

FEAST OF ST. PETER. The feast of St. Peter is a day on which the Romans annually display their love and reverence for their first Bishop in an impressive and solemn manner. The Piazza Venezia to St. Peter's itself is thronged with tens of thousands, making you imagine, if you are a stranger, that you will find some difficulty in entering the great temple; but when you pass the doors, St. Peter's is not half full, though there are probably between 30,000 and 40,000 of the faithful in it. There is one feature of the solemnity that is most impressive, and that is the sight of the immense line of people that file past the bronze statue of St. Peter and reverently kiss

the foot as they pass. The Romans never on any account neglect this testimony of their love and reverence for their first Bishop on his feast—nay, the good mothers bring their babies to kiss the foot of the fisherman, and fathers lift their little sons high enough to permit them to touch the venerated statue with their lips. This has gone on now for about fifteen centuries, with the result that even the bronze has been worn away from the foot.

A MAGNIFICENT EMBLEM OF THE PAPACY. This statue of St. Peter is now a well known object of devotion all over the world, and the custom of placing a copy of it in churches all over Christendom is becoming more and more common every day. It is a magnificent emblem of the Papacy itself. The metal of it once formed a statue of Capitoline Jove, who ruled the world from the Capitol hill, and it was moulded to represent the Prince of Apostles in commemoration of Leo the Great's victory over Aetius, the "scourge of God." In all the invasions, persecutions, revolutions, sackings and profanations which have devastated Rome during the last 1,500 years, no impious hand has ever been permitted to injure it. Leo the Isaurian, Emperor of Constantinople, and founder of the Iconoclasts, or Image-breakers, wrote to Pope Gregory II in 726, that he was sending a powerful fleet with an army to Rome, with orders to destroy the famous statue, which even in his time, had come to be styled "Invicta Unconquered." But the fleet went down in the Adriatic, and only a few were left to tell the tale of the immense disaster.

Pious Catholics have in past ages set apart part of their wealth to be devoted to spreading veneration for the famous statue and many miracles have been worked at this shrine. One very remarkable prodigy took place during the holy year of 1725, when a German named Kowalski, a hopeless paralytic, was instantly cured on being lifted to kiss the foot of the statue.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

OF THE CONTEMPT OF ALL TEMPORAL GLORY AND HONOR.

My son, take it not to heart, if thou seest others honored and advanced and thyself despised and debased. Lift up thy heart to Me in heaven, and thou wilt not be concerned at thy being contemned by men upon earth. Disciple, Lord, we are in blindness, and are quickly seduced by vanity. If I look well into myself, never was any injury done me by any creature, and therefore I cannot justly complain of Thee.

For, because I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, all creatures have reason to take up arms against me. To me therefore confusion and contempt is justly due; but to Thee praise, honor and glory. And unless I put myself in this disposition, to be willing to be despised and forsaken by all creatures and to be nothing at all, I cannot arrive at inward peace and strength, nor be spiritually enlightened, nor fully united to Thee.

FIFTY FRUITLESS YEARS.

FIGURES SHOWING THAT IT DOES NOT PAY TO TRY TO "CONVERT" CATHOLIC PEOPLE.

From the Catholic Sun. When New Mexico and Arizona were taken from Mexico and erected into United States Territories at once, as in the case of Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines, there was a great rush of Methodist missionaries into the newly acquired sections. Then, as now, the brethren considered it their imperative duty to follow the flag; and "the sword of the spirit" in the other. That was nearly fifty years ago. What has their labor gained? The people of those Territories were Catholic then and Catholic they are to-day. The current number of "Christianity in earnest," an official Methodist publication devoted exclusively to missions and such like, shows that in Arizona Methodism claim only 1,280 members who, very strangely, seem to require twenty-seven churches that need and will receive \$500 aid this year. New Mexico has only 3,223 of the emotional brethren, yet these have sixty-five meeting houses, and the English-speaking mission has just been voted \$1,500 in help, and the Spanish \$1,000. We infer from this that there are fewer Spanish than English disciples out there after fifty years of supererogation and warring upon Rome. The moral is that it does not pay to convert Catholic people. It is prayer prayed in vain and cash poured out like rain. The brethren ought to give up effort and leave the Pope's children to their fate. Just think of the tens of thousands expended in those two Territories during the last fifty years, and yet note how few the converts gained. No wonder that occasionally there is sadness in the ranks and sometimes wailing in the high places.

TO MARY

In robes immaculate, the perfumed earth Now wakes to glory—'ere on us we woke the sheen of Lilies, whose lures we decks meridian blaze. O Lady list, nor scorn, while all rejoice, The faltering tribute of this meek M. KENT.

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FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Fourth Sunday After Easter. CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION.

"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves."—St. James 1: 22

Brethren, I fancy if St. James were addressing the Christians of our day he would be inclined to lay a little more stress upon the hearing of the word; for whatever may be said about the "doers of the Word" it cannot be denied that the number of those who hear God's word with advantage might be increased. Indeed, there are many for whom a High Mass sermon in view of its rarity, would be a luxury, and for whom even a five minute sermon is long and wearisome. In addressing you, dear brethren, it seems hardly necessary to dwell much upon the importance of hearing God's holy Word, for we have reason to believe you value it most highly. But there are none of us who know too much; we are born in ignorance, and as long as we live we must feel the need of instructions and exhortations on the great questions of the soul—how to live and how to die well. This the Word of God supplies, for, as St. John Chrysostom says: "What food is for the body, the Word of God is to the soul," and if we neglect to nourish our souls with the food, we shall eventually grow weary and cold in God's service, and die through want of strength.

But the important question is this: how am I to hear the Word of God? Oh! how many Christians have listened to the Word of God, which He Himself declares to be "words of fire," and have profited nothing, have remained cold and indifferent to the warnings of that voice that "breathes where it listeth"—Christians who fancy they are wise enough and experienced enough, and who never think of applying these burning words to themselves.

How can I hear the Word of God with profit to my soul? "With meekness," says St. James, "be ye ready to receive the Word, which is able to save your souls." Our Lord frequently likens the Word to the seed which the tiller sows in the field. Now, he who sows the seed must first carefully prepare the ground, for the harvest will be in proportion to the care he bestows in the preparation of the ground. The seed is the Word of God; and, dear brethren, your hearts, not your ears, are the ground, and therefore you must prepare your hearts. And how? Just as we must cleanse the ground from all that would prevent the seed from bringing forth good fruit, so must it be with the heart. It is mortal sin there? Turn it out, for it is mortal sin which, like thorns, will choke and destroy the good seed. Receive the Word of God with docility and meekness, with a longing desire to learn from Him through His ministers how to lead a life worthy of our calling.

"He who has ears to hear let him hear," says our Lord. Indeed, brethren, we all have ears, and why is it, then, that we do not hear? I will tell you why we do not hear, why the voice of God does not penetrate into our hearts. It is because the soil is not prepared; it is because we come to hear the Word with hearts filled with worldly cares or even evil desires, with deep-rooted attachments to things unlawful, with no intention of learning how to lead better lives. If it were only something new we had to learn, some new doctrine, some new and fanciful creed; but no, it is the same Word that was spoken to the early Christians, only now by its practical application to our hearts.

But now, brethren, mark how St. James would have us not deceive ourselves. It is not enough, he tells us, to come here Sunday after Sunday and listen to the Word of God, but we must be doers of the Word; that is to say, we must carry out practically in our every-day life the lessons and inspirations which have been offered us through the ministry of preaching. For if a man, says he, be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his natural countenance in a glass; for he beheld himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was. Be not like this man, brethren, if you would save your souls. When listening to the Word of God, wherein the wants, the failings, the defects of your souls are mirrored forth, go not your way forgetful of what, through God's grace, has been revealed to you, but with meekness receive the engrained Word, which is able to save your souls, and blessed will you be if you hear the Word of God and keep it.

MATER ADMIRABILIS.

Once homeless in Thy people's town, Ancestral Bethlehem, To-day I stand, Thy peerless crown Bears Heaven's most brilliant gem; And though in Egypt, exiled, poor, When I gazed on Thee, the King, That swift, unlocks the wondrous door Of God's own treasury.

Mater Admirabilis! Yet oft as angels with Thy smile, And seraphs wait Thy will, Thy splendours o'er the white Thy thoughts exclusive fill; Since when around Thee glories shine That light celestial mirth, The sweetest office all in Thine To succour souls on earth.

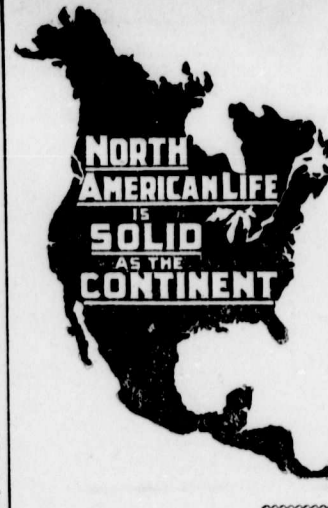
Mater Admirabilis! Hear them again, while bending low, Loved litanies we raise; Let gracious answers Faith shall know Blind Lullabies amaze; That over continent and main One day, with ardent joy, The woe may change the high refrain Glad angels now employ;

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