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PANEGYRIC ON ST. PATRICK, DELIVERED BY HIS EMINENCE THE CARDINAL ARCH-BISHOP OF WESTMINSTER,

ON THE FESTIVAL OF THE SAINT, IN ST. PATRICK'S, SOHO, ON MARCH 17, 1853.

"For I think that God hath set forth us apostles, the last, as it were, men destined to death; because we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men."—1 Cor. iv. 9.

The constitution, the very aspect of the Church, my brethren, has been the same from the beginning, and will continue unaltered until the end of time. The same government, the same trials, the same successes, the same virtues, the same conflicts, the same characters, have continued from the first moment, and will continue to the last, to distinguish her from every other religious body, from every other institution, and from whatever cannot claim, like her, to be the work of God. The first ages saw the same succession of Pontiffs, the same Hierarchy of Priests, the same communities of Religious, the same orders of sacred virgins as we see distinguishing the Church in the present hour. And if we read the history of one century and compare it with the similar events of another, we find how little change, even in the smallest feature of the Church, is to be traced from age to age. But how can it be otherwise, considering that on her age and time can have no effect—that even after she has run through ages of her course, she is the same spouse of Christ, in her freshness, without spot or wrinkle, without marks of the vicissitudes, the sufferings, the alienations, and even the times through which she had to pass.

Then, whoever at any time of the Church's existence, at any moment of her unending course, is called to the sublime office of the Apostleship—whoever receives the commission first given to the Apostles, and by them transmitted through the succession of ages and delivered into the hands of chosen individuals—whoever has any share directly or indirectly, in that command to go and preach the Gospel to all nations, to carry the word of God where until now it was unknown, to break down the barriers of error and of infidelity, and instead of the desert place which is around them, to make the earth produce the beautiful flowers and the sweet fruits of Christianity, and turn it into the garden of God—whoever receives a part in that commission to launch his bark at once into the deep, and then throw forth his Apostolic nets, will be found to resemble the Apostles to whom these Divine commands were first addressed, not merely in the splendor of their success, not merely in the power of their works, not only in the eloquence and effect of their words, but still more in whatever of humiliation, and persecution, and trial, and inward bitterness was their portion, while they were scattering their seed in sorrow, and going tearfully along those furrows which with the sweat of their brow they had made, until they became likewise partakers of that joy which shall be granted only when they gather in their harvest to the eternal repositories of God!

If then, my brethren, the Apostle whose great annual feast is celebrated this day, and for which you have now met, is truly an Apostle of the Lamb—if he had a commission, not from man, but from God, to go to a distant country, a country dear to many hearts here to-day, and which beat warmly and fervently with love and reverence towards Him—if, like St. Paul, he received his Apostleship from God, he may well have said of himself, and no doubt in his humility he did apply the words to himself, that he too appeared as the last of men, as one of those men not merely destined to slaughter, but one who, in various ways, had become, in spite of himself, "a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men." It is this characteristic of the Apostleship, as applied to the blessed Saint Patrick, which I wish to place before you, and to show you that the characteristics which Saint Paul here claims for himself must likewise be considered as having belonged to him.

We are made, says St. Paul, first, a spectacle to the world. And what is this world of which the Apostle speaks? You know well, my brethren, how familiarly it is spoken of in the Gospel, and particularly in the Epistles of Saint Paul, as "the enemy of God." The world comprises within itself that vast multitude of men of every age, of every class, and of every country who may well be said to be in a conspiracy against the propagation of whatever is holy and whatever is divine. The world is that vast multitude of mankind who will not believe in the existence of a truly Christian and disinterested work—who cannot understand that any person would do anything, and still more, suffer anything, for Christ—that multitude to whom the cross is foolishness, and they who follow it are but fools. If they see a man who has devoted himself to what he considers and knows to be God's work—if they see one who gives himself no pleasure in the things and enjoyments of this world, who keeps himself aloof from its allurements, who keeps on in his own silent path doing good, who

by these means accomplishes in some manner that which he undertakes, is successful in propagating the truth, has fruit in bringing sinners to repentance—and if in doing so he is in the least honored, respected, and esteemed by others, the world is sure to find that there was plenty of selfish motives, ambition, self love, or some other mean and paltry feeling at the foundation of all he did—that it was such feelings that administered the sap to what may seem to have grown and flourished. They cannot understand the possibility of any one loving his Saviour more than this world, and doing His work purely for His own sake, and for his reward. The world believes not, in fine, in the spirit of sacrifice which is the very groundwork of the Apostleship. And when it sees the great things done for God, and hears of God rewarding what is done for Him; when it is told of an Apostle who has gone forth to the distant ends of the earth, without the provision necessary for his existence, leading a poor and wretched life, and converting nations, and when it is told that God is pleased to favor the work by wonderful signs and gifts supernatural, the world smiles upon it all, and discovers abundance of rational motives why such should have been the case, and sees clearly that the Apostle had his full reward in the honor bestowed upon him. This is the world to which the Apostle becomes, in the first instance; a spectacle.

Can you not easily imagine to yourselves that when St. Patrick was in his captivity, when he was a poor slave feeding the flocks of a strange master—if he ever related to those by whom he was surrounded, who shared the same fate, and whose thoughts were still grovelling among the things of earth—if he ever said that, poor boy as he was, engaged in that servile occupation he looked forward to a day when he should preach the Gospel to a barbarous nation, and convert it to Christ—if he ever told them that in his sleep he had seen a man of Ireland approach him, and ask him to go to that country, and teach the doctrines of eternal life—do you think that that little world which surrounded him did not look upon him as the brethren of Joseph when they heard his dreams, and say, "You to be the Bishop, the Apostle, the Priest of a nation?" And when they saw him, in that spirit which alone could feel such thoughts, passing whole nights in prayer, praying to God in the midst of the sorrows of captivity, forgetting his own home and the dear ones that were in his thoughts of the future home which God was preparing for His Disciple, and still more that blessed home to which alone he aspired as his reward—did they not mock him as the hypocrite who was seeking for favor by his piety and his psalms? Did they not consider that it was either a foolish delusion or a cunning artifice of which he was making use for some earthly purpose? That was the world which surrounded him; and, no doubt, he was a spectacle to that world which could neither understand nor appreciate the sublime thoughts which filled his breast.

And when in after life this roaming youth left his grovelling occupation, after the flower of youth had withered away, he still adhered to those same thoughts, and devoted himself to those studies which were necessary for the work before him, how much had he to encounter, how much had he to suffer from those who may have been made acquainted with his long-cherished thoughts, with his dearest intentions? And when at last his work is done, he comes before his Sovereign Pontiff, and asks for this mission for Ireland, into which scarcely a ray of the Gospel has broken, of which the nearest shores were scarcely known to the Roman conquerors of Britain, of which the language and its different dialects were not probably spoken by one single man either in Rome or in the extent of the Roman dominions—an uncouth jargon both to the ear and mind, and almost beyond the power of civilized man to learn—when he asks at once to be sent thither, without having gone through what may be considered the usual preparatory course, without having given any extraordinary proofs either of future success or of his Apostleship, without having shown any evidence of that zeal and intense feeling which Divine inspiration alone can give, he boldly asks to be sent thither, and undertake what might appear a hopeless task for even an army of Missionaries, do you think that that portion of the world who heard of this extraordinary desire, of this ambition to be so glorious in the Church, did not consider it a mere act of deceit and presumption, and perhaps spoke of Patrick in words neither kind nor friendly? Is it not probable that to the Sovereign Pontiff himself, who was thus solicited, there came wise, and grave, and holy men to tell him to beware of what might prove an adventurous scheme, and not trust the foundation of a new Church to one who was not a Bishop, who was not known, but might rather be said to be unknown in the Church.

But while he was thus made a spectacle to the world, God was watching over him, and directing the

wiser counsels of Him whom He had appointed to rule over His Church. His desire is granted; he is, to the amazement of many, now raised to the dignity of the Episcopacy; he is sent forth to undertake the conversion of that country and establish there a Church in communion with the See of Peter. To him may be said to have been at once committed the fulness of the Church's power; for he was left to name sees, and to arrange the whole system of Ecclesiastical government in conformity, no doubt, with the pattern which already existed everywhere in the Church, but, at the same time, with the free use of his own sound and holy judgment as to the manner in which these laws should be adopted.

And now, after the world has ceased to look upon him, to wonder, and to speak of him—after the world has lost sight of him, he has committed himself to the frail bark which shall throw him, like the shipwrecked Jonas, upon that desert coast, and he ceases to occupy any longer even their passing thoughts, he begins instead to be a spectacle to the Angels of God.—They in their turn now begin to watch with lively interest what is about to take place, and to follow step by step with wonder and with delight the course of this great Apostle. Then fly from the battlements of Heaven those angels who have watched over that country, and have been praying for its conversion—those angels with kingdoms, of whom we read in the Book of Daniel, who watch over the fate of entire nations, who fight for them, when necessary, against evil spirits; those Angels who have been holding up their hands to Heaven, and entreating the Lord of Mercy to look down upon a country whose inhabitants were shrouded under the dark clouds of idolatry, but still showed symptoms of hope, and manifested precious and favorable dispositions for receiving the truths of life; those Angels now behold that their request has been heard. They have seen in the Vatican the youthful Apostle prostrate before the footstool of the Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul, and then received from the hands of the Sovereign Pontiff himself the commission to go forth and preach the Gospel. They now watch over his progress, lest he should dash his foot against a stone. They have taken in hand the vessel in which he has embarked, and led it safely to the shores of that country. He lands, and they surround him as an impregnable host. They have turned to him as the means by which God is to carry into effect their supplications. They exult for joy that the light of salvation hath appeared in the midst of that darkness, and that the first ray of its brightness has now burst on that land. They now become the spectators of the scenes which are about to ensue. Do you not think that these Angels rejoiced as they watched, step by step, the progress of the Gospel through the whole of that land, that they shouted for joy when for the first time the waters of Baptism were poured forth, and went, as that stream which Ezekiel saw issuing from the temple of God, deepening and swelling in its course until it became as the waves of the ocean, in which all were immersed, and from which all the inhabitants came forth clean, and pure, and holy—a royal Priesthood, and a people renovated and sanctified by God? How did they rejoice when for the first time there was raised up in that island the Bread of Life to be adored, when the Victim of Salvation was glorified for the first time in that infidel land? How were they gladdened when the Apostle went from town to town, everywhere leaving behind him the symbol of Christianity, the Cross planted in the midst of every village; and when they saw the humble church or chapel erected in the midst of the poor inhabitants that surrounded them, and beheld the towers, that perhaps remain to this day, raised to attest the truth of Christianity? How did they still more increase their adoration and their canticles of joy, when Bishops were consecrated and Priests ordained, and when in the course of a few years that land, which before was but one of darkness and ignorance, became so brightly enlightened by the rays of that truth which Patrick was the first to impart, that it brought from the whole world the extraordinary appellation of the "Island of Saints," and was considered the instructor and teacher of other nations, to which men came from Italy itself to learn more deeply the truths of religion?—How did Angels joyfully watch the progress of his holy work as communities rose on every side, and men were easily found to fill the new structures in which from morning to night the praises of God were sung—when, even at midnight, they would hear ascending to their own heaven the canticles which those blessed recluses sent forth without intermission, succeeding one another from place to place, so that throughout the whole of the land there was an unceasing, continued course of praise to God in psalms, and hymns, and holy canticles, as there was among the whole of those celestial spirits themselves—when trains of holy virgins following the precepts of that first Apostle of the island filled the houses that were

prepared for them, and there began that edifying course which has been uninterrupted until the present day of simple prayer and contemplation, and afterwards, works of charity and mercy which have filled the whole of that land with a peculiar odor of sanctity! how, in fine, when in the course of our man's life they saw the whole kingdom converted; its king, its Priests, its people, its soldiers, the whole of that immense nation speaking but one tongue, not merely by the lips of the body, but of the understanding; all united as one body and one soul in the power with which they embraced this love and unity of the truth.

Thus, my brethren, did St. Patrick continue through the whole course of his life to be a spectacle to Angels, who rejoiced as he went forward, who comforted him in all his works, and who, at length, when the hour came in which he had to depart to Him that sent him, formed a joyful choir around him to keep him safe from the assaults of the enemy of souls, to breathe into his heart thoughts of confidence and of love to sing around him those familiar songs which they had often mingled with his own praises of God, and thus to let him know that they were near to protect him, and to conduct him to his reward. And Angels watched that life as it was ebbing and fast going away; those Angels who considered themselves his very debtors for what he had done in behalf of souls dear to them, and committed to his charge. And when at last that blessed spirit was separated from its body, they bore it away as a companion of their own—as one whom they loved, and one with whom they had themselves long associated.—Each seized some memorial of his work to bring before him around the throne of grace—the praises of thousands of souls converted by his preaching, the memorials of his zeal and piety scattered everywhere over the whole land, his own prayers and mortifications, and the innumerable deeds of his holiness and devotion. The whole army of those blessed spirits can scarce suffice each to bring before the tribunal of God the record and evidence of some great and mighty work which he had performed for God's sake.

Such a soul as that needed not to fear, but was sure to be at once received into the embrace of Him who welcomes His faithful servants, and who, because they have been faithful over a few things, makes them rulers over many things. And may we not believe that if to Patrick was given also, what we so familiarly attribute to the Angels and Saints of God, some mission and interest in this lower world—if to him who was faithful in a few things was not only given the joy of Heaven, but also a more especial rule over many things—may we not most piously believe that it was his own peculiar country, the country of his adoption, the country of his labor, the country of his successes, the country wherein he so faithfully discharged his Apostleship, which was given to him to be under his perpetual guardianship, to be watched over by him with that tenderness and care which he manifested to it during his life, to continue the growth and consolidation of that work which he had been called to nurture in its immaturity and its infancy.

It was then that Patrick began to be that spectacle to men which, during his life, he had been to angels, when men began to think and know his glories, when his work began to be contemplated in the Church, when not only within the limits of that country which had been the special scene of his labors, but over the whole world became known what he had done for God—what he had achieved for the Church—what he had accomplished for the salvation of men, when he began to be truly valued and considered. And when, as age went after age, his work was found to be confirmed, his praise, his glory increased. He became more loud and frequent in the mouths of men; he became one of the Saints of the Calendar; he became the Patron Saint, most justly, of that country which he converted. The place of his burial became honored, and a pilgrimage to it most dear to those who had been benefited by his apostleship; and year after year, without diminution even to the end of time, will be sacred and dear to millions, some of whom are at the very extremities of the earth—some of whom dwell on this very day in those countries that are in darkness when we have day. Millions scattered in the west, and those—found in whatever condition, whether prosperity or adversity, in every part of the globe—will unite this day in singing his praises, and proclaiming him the Saint to whom they owe the knowledge of the truth and of eternal life. And is not this sainted Apostle a spectacle to the whole world, when there is not a spot hardly, or a portion of the globe, or the small island in the heart of the ocean, from which there is not some eye turned towards him, now in glory in heaven, in which some mouth or other speaks not of him in accents of love, and in which there is not a breast but is adorned, if possible, with his well known badge, wearing it in token of his reverence to St.