

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. 15-19.



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 Prescrip. xiii.

There is one God, and one Church, and one Chair 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 adulterous, 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 Jerusalem. Cat. xi. l.

Calendar.

April 8—Sunday—Easter Sunday } Doub  
" 9—Monday—Easter Monday } I class.  
" 10—Tuesday—Easter Tuesday }  
" 11—Wednesday—Easter Wednesday }  
" 12—Thursday—Easter Thursday }  
" 13—Friday—Easter Friday }  
" Saturday—Easter Saturday com of St Tiburtius V and M.

COMPITUM,

OR,

The Meeting of the Ways at the Catholic Church. THE ROAD OF YOUTH.

Ainsi du tout enfance delaissey Et aveques Jeunesse m'ea alej.

It is thus that the old poet, Charles of Orleans, speaks of his advance to the second road of this great forest, which bears the inviting name of youth, where, if obstacles increase to conceal the openings to truth, its attractive force, as we shall find, increases with the development of the intelligence, or the expansion of those sweet affections which it is the office of religion to regulate and sanctify; for nature, crescent, does not grow alone in thews and bulk; but as this temple waxes, the inward service of the mind and soul grows wide withal. Still more than childhood youth is full of piercing observations, which it copies and treasures up. At first sight of a thousand things which grown men remark not, it calls like Hamlet for its tablet, and says, "Meet it is, I set it down." How many lessons then are chronicled which attest the hollowness of all those who would conceal from it the glories of the Catholic Church—Error likes not that the sharp wit with which the young will often reason should ever glance at its "establishments." None are for it that look into it with considerate eyes. Let it be our object then here to observe, how youth, wandering thus through the forest of life, finds avenues at every turn, as if made expressly for itself, through which it can discern the great happy bourn to which all wishes tend. Now, at the first steps it is clear that piety, or the religious sense, is congenial to the young. Here is the first opening, and truly a glorious one it is.—Never was there an error in more flat contradiction to experience than the idea, that as men grow old they grow religious. The general order is exactly the inverse, according to the remark of Prospero:

"And as with age his body uglier grows, So his mind cankers"

Those whom we meet upon the road of the young are therefore pious, and consequently disposed to acquiesce in the truth of catholicity.—What can be more striking than their reverential air in churches! The sweet, serious, and almost severe countenance of holy youth before the altar is so divinely beautiful, that one might imagine it could convert an observer to the love of the Catholic religion, in which alone that look is found. Niess speaks of a boy in a certain college, in the year 1609, who in consequence of some disease being admonished to stand, and not to kneel in the church, replied, that he would rather die than not show reverence to God in his holy temple. Youth's fervent prayer with joined palms, its devout contemplation, fancy free, leaving indifference, incredulity, and the slavery of a defiled imagination to those whom long misused years have cankered, are among the proofs that the morning of life is like the morning of the day, clear, pure, harmonious, that objects are then distinctly seen, and that the

commonest seem golden. The road of youth, naturally elevated, commands thus by its ordinary avenues noble views of truth, but the history of the Church bears witness to the general and pure belief of all ages, that other extraordinary openings are often made by angels' hands, and that light is afforded miraculously to guide the young, of which, perhaps, we should find that instances are never wanting, if all that passes in the youthful mind were known.

John Moschus relates a vision which terrified some children who tended cattle in the fields near the town of Torax in Syria, which led to the erection of a monastery on the spot; and Drexelius mentions a dream which led to the conversion of two Hebrew boys of Portugal in later times. But St Thomas of Villanova supplies a more remarkable instance "A certain convert from Judaism, when sick, sent for me," says the Archbishop, "and related to me the cause of his conversion. When I was a boy, he said, and yet a Jew, I was travelling with another Jew boy for some business of my father, and by the way we talked devoutly about the Messiah that we thought was to come, wishing that it might be in our days. and as we spoke together thus, we excited each other to greater fervour of piety. That evening, in the twilight, the sky seemed suddenly illuminated, and the heaven as if were to open, and we both knelt down and besought God to reveal to us his Messiah, when, in the midst of the brightness we saw a resplendent chalice, surmounted by the Host, according to the Christian rites. From that moment we believed in Christ, and on my return home I secretly became a Christian and received holy baptism."

We find an instance of the same extraordinary guidance nearer home. The youth in a brown cloak seen twice by the martyr, Edmund Jennings, near St Paul's in London, was discovered miraculously by him to be his own brother, for whom he was searching, when he would not otherwise have been able to recognise him, from not having seen him since he was a little boy eight years before; for each time, on meeting him, who only struck his attention as being so unlike the pursuivant through fear of whose wolf-like figure he had looked back to see who was following him, he felt all his joints trembling, and his face glowing, and his whole body bathed in a cold sweat, which strange accident twice occurring, led him to suspect that this strange boy, thus casually met, must be the poor lost brother, for the recovery of whose soul he was exposing himself to the death he soon after suffered, and which, by a subsequent illumination of grace as wonderful, consequent upon the sorrow it occasioned, led to that youth's conversion to the Catholic faith.

But not to remain at these mystic spots upon the way, it is certain that the mere natural characteristics of youth have a tendency to direct it on the path which leads to the Catholic Church. The avenues on the road of youth are, however, more the result of manners than of reason. The views are more elevated, mystic, and divine, than those in general which afterwards succeed, being rather angelical and intuitive, than the result of the slow and purely human process of ratiocination. They are besides owing much to the power of taking a keen clear glance at things as they exist on every side, for boys purchase much knowledge by their penny of observation, and to an obedient docile acquiescence in the just impressions which are opposed by the passions and interests which later years bring with them.

We must not, therefore, be surprised, if the instances at which we arrive should be disdained as inadequate by the judgement of a mere secular and proud philosophy, which is as incapable of comprehending as it is of experiencing the impression. We come first, then, to the sweet short opening of love or charity, to which all young hearts are so easily inclined.

That disposition to make friends with every one, and love him as a brother at first sight,—to make a stranger welcome as morn to the lark, and give the hand of fellowship at each obliging turn without suspicion or the pride that says how clay and clay differ in dignity, whose dust is both alike, bespeaks not only the amiable graces which win the favour of all observers, but a near approach to the paradise of union which catholicity creates on earth; for as St Bernard says, "Only puerile humility pleases God, whether in an angel or in a man."

To trust, to love, to hope, is to be catholic; to dispute, to criticise, to systematize, to protest against the common belief, is to be its opposite. and clearly youth inclines to the former of these divisions of human thought. The latter is found upon other roads that lead far indeed from the point towards which the faces of the young are turned. "I remember," says St Dorotheus, "having seen a man of this kind. At first, if any of the brethren spoke of any one with praise immediately he would utter something disdainful against him, saying, 'Quis est ille? Non est alius praeter Zosimam et qui cum eo sunt.' Afterwards he proceeded to despise also others, and to say that there was no one of any merit excepting Macarius. Soon after, 'Who is Macarius?' he asked. 'There is no one but Basil and Gregory.' Then afterwards he thought them worthless, and all men but Peter and Paul. I predicted what would be the issue, that he would not spare even them, and in fact, at last, he despised all but the Trinity, concluding with blasphemies against God." This is the wide common road of the mature in years, which leads them in a direction exactly opposite to the lustrous centre. Youth on the contrary, loves and admires; and into such souls faith creeps like to a breeze from heaven. Take the lightest for example—

"Two lads that thought there was no more behind,  
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,  
And to be boy eternal."

The poet then bears witness that their talk was not that of such secular grown men, which experience proves can gradually uproot all the germs of faith, indicating chiefly

"A sharp wit, match'd with too blunt a will,  
Whose edge hath power to cut, whose will still wills  
It should none spare that comes within his power,"

ever repeating "ambiguous words and jealousies to sound or taint integrity." On the contrary, while on this happy road what they changed was innocence for innocence; they know not the doctrine of ill-doing; no, nor dreamed that any did. In vain, as far as the impression on boys is concerned, would be "the shrug, the hum, or ha, those petty brands that calumny doth use," unless to excite laughter at the expense of him who employed them. As long as you pursue the road of youth, if ever you should be invited to halt for the sake of hearing slanderous speech, there will be always comrades whose reply may remind you of those words in Dante:

"Why are thy thoughts thus riveted, my guide  
Exclaim'd, that though hast slack'd thy pace  
I reports it thee what thing is whisper'd herof?"

\* Ap Heronius Oeconomico Monast. lib. iv. G. † ii. 5.

If these whispers be against holy things or holy persons, then, evil is detected at this stage of life's journey with a quickness of perception that seems like an intuitive sense, confirming the justice of the principle which Plato adopts when he makes it a kind of reception that a proposition meets with from the young a criterion of its truth. "What impression," he asks, "will such discourses produce on the mind of a youth of good disposition, and an understanding quick to draw the proper conclusion from what he hears?"

But let us take another point of view. Faith prompts to generous action, not to cold sophisticated speech, and might almost inspire that schoolboy's boast—"I read much; yet nothing that many masters knew or taught I cared to learn; but from that secret story of my own study wrought linked armour for my own soul, before it might walk forth to war among mankind." Then will faith please beyond every thing else,

"Quant jeunesse tient gens en seigneurie," as an old poet says; but often age fills up with the thorns of worldly wisdom this noble avenue. Ulysses, addressing Neoptolomus, makes a sad confession in contrasting the generous spirit of early with the politic sophistry of later life. I, too, when young had a lazy tongue, but a prompt arm—now, however, experience has taught me that it is the tongue and not the arm which governs all things with mortals.

Youth, again, is drawn to the centre by the want which it experiences of a divine fulfilment of its aspirations. Suppose the church and all the sweet relations, hopes, and fruits it yields removed—and

"Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps  
From its new tenement and looks abroad  
For happiness and sympathy, how stern  
And desolate a tract is this wide world:  
How wither'd all the buds of natural good!  
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping  
storms."

What unmitigated pains and toils will then await the young from the very beginning—how much will they have to suffer! Dryden ought not to have deemed it such

"Strange cozenage,  
That none would live past years again."

Triumphs of great deeds, it is true, support for a moment the ardent spirit; and admiration often fills the eyes with tears. But shut out from man all avenues to faith, and you make his youth the sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb. Guides indeed will not be wanting. But what guides? Alas! the multitude of deceivers assuming this office, who infest the beautiful ways of early life, will feel no remorse or shame when their poor victim cries, too late,

"Quae gloria vestra est,  
Si puerum juvenes, si multi fallitis unum?"

But at truth's first accents the spirit's sleep is burst, and youth instinctively will recognize its friend. "Sure something holy lodges in that breast!" it will exclaim; "and with these raptures moves the vocal air to testify his hidden residence." Yes, good youth, within this close dungeon of innumerable boughs, there are guides divinely charged to lead you to the source of happiness.

"If these you seek,  
It were a journey like the path to heaven,  
To help you find them."

\* Do Repub. ii. † Soph Phil 98. ‡ Ovid Met iii 11.

\* Alphabet Christi, 303.

\* In Die Corp Christi, c. iii.