

joined a far-spread sect, which affected to be philosophical and enlightened, to take large views of things, and to correct the vulgar, that is, the Catholic notions of God and Christ, of sin and the way to heaven. In this sect of his he remained for some years; yet what he was taught there did not satisfy him. It pleased him for a time, and then he found he had been eating for food what did not nourish; he became hungry and thirsty after something more substantial, he knew not what; he despised himself for being a slave to the flesh; he found his religion did not help him to overcome it; he understood he had not gained the truth, and he cried out, "O, who will tell me where to seek it, who will bring me to it?"

Why did he not join the Catholic Church at once? I have told you why; he saw that truth was nowhere else, but he was not sure it was there. He thought there was something mean, narrow, irrational in her system of doctrine; he lacked the gift of faith. Then a great conflict began with him,—the conflict of nature with grace, of nature and her children, the flesh and false reason, against conscience and the pleadings of the Divine Spirit, leading him to better things. Though he was in mortal sin and a state of perdition, yet God was visiting him, and giving him the first fruits of those influences which were in the end to bring him out of it. Time went on; and looking at him, as his Guardian Angel might look at him, you would have said that, in spite of much perverseness, and many a successful struggle against his Almighty Adversary, in spite of his still being, as before, in a state of wrath, nevertheless grace was making way in his soul,—he was advancing towards the Church. He did not know it himself, he could not recognise it himself; but an eager interest in him, and then a joy, was springing up in heaven among the Angels of God. At last he came within the range of a great Saint in a foreign country, and though he pretended not to acknowledge him, his attention was arrested by him, and he could not help coming to sacred places to look at him again and again. He began to watch him and speculate about him, and wondered with himself whether he was happy. He found himself frequently in Church, listening to the holy preacher, and he once asked his advice how to find what he was seeking. And now a final conflict came on with the flesh; it was hard, very hard to part with the indulgences of years, it was hard to part and never to meet again. O, sin was so sweet, how could he bid it farewell? how could he tear himself away from its embrace, and betake himself to that lonely and dreary way which led heavenwards? but God's grace was sweeter far, and it convinced him while it won him; it convinced his reason, and prevailed;—and he who without it would have lived and died a child of Satan, became, under its wonder-working power, an oracle of sanctity and truth.

And do you not think, my brethren, that he was better fitted than another to persuade his brethren as he had been persuaded, and to preach the holy doctrine which he had despised? Not that sin is better than obedience, or the sinner than the just; but that God in His mercy makes use of sin against itself, that it turns past sin into a present benefit, that, while He washes away its guilt, and subdues its power, He leaves it in the penitent in such sense as enables him, from the knowledge of its devices, to assault it more vigorously and strike it more truly, when it meets him in other men; that, while He, by His omnipotent grace, can make the soul as clean as if it had never sinned; He leaves it in possession of a tenderness and compassion for other sinners, an experience how to deal with them, greater than if it had never sinned; and moreover that, in those rare and special instances, of one of which I have been speaking, He holds up to us, for our instruction and our comfort, what He can do, even for the most guilty, if they sincerely come to Him for a pardon and a cure. There is no limit to be put to the bounty and power of God's grace; and to feel sorrow for our sins, and to supplicate His mercy, is a sort of present pledge to us in our hearts, that He will grant us the good gifts we are seeking. He can do what he will with the soul of man. He is infinitely more powerful than the foul spirit to whom the sinner has sold himself, and can cast him out. O my dear brethren, though your conscience witnesses against you, He can disburden it; whether you have sinned less, or whether you have sinned more, He can make you as clean in His sight, and as acceptable to Him, as if you had never gone from Him. Gradually will He destroy your sinful habits, and at once will He restore you to His favor. Such is the power of the Sacrament of Penance, that, be your load of guilt heavier, or be it lighter, it removes it, whatever it is. It is as easy to Him to wash out the many sins as the few. Do you recollect in the Old Testament the history of the cure of Naaman, the Syrian, by the prophet, Eliseus? He had that dreadful incurable disease called the leprosy, which was a white crust upon the skin, making the whole person hideous, and typifying the hideousness of sin. The prophet bade him bathe in the river Jordan, and the disease disappeared; the "flesh," says the inspired writer, "was restored to him as the flesh of a little child." Here then we have a representation not only of what sin is, but of what God's grace is. It can undo the past; it can realise the hopeless. No sinner, ever so odious, but may become a saint; no saint, ever so exalted, but has been, or might have been a sinner. Grace overcomes nature, and grace only overcomes it. Take that holy child, the blessed St. Agnes, who, at the age of thirteen, resolved to die rather than deny the faith; and stood enveloped in an atmosphere of purity, and diffused around her a heavenly influence, in the very home of evil spirits into which the heathen brought her; or consider the angelical Aloysius, of whom it hardly is left upon record that he committed even a venial sin; or St. Agatha, St. Juliana, St. Rose, St. Casimir, or St. Stanislas, to whom the very notion of any unbecoming imagination had been as

death; well, there is not one of these seraphic souls, but, except for God's grace, might have been a degraded, loathsome leper, an outcast from his kind; not one, but might, or rather would, have lived the life of a brute creature, and died the death of a reprobate, and laid down in hell eternally in the devil's arms; had not God put a new heart and a new spirit within him, and made him what he could not make himself.

All good men are not Saints, my brethren—all converted souls do not become Saints. I will not promise, that, if you turn to God, you will reach that height of sanctity which the Saints have reached;—true; still I am showing you that the Saints are by nature no better than you; that the conscientious and laborious Priests, who have the charge of the faithful, are by nature no better than those whom they have to convert, whom they have to reform. It is God's special-mercy towards you, that we by nature are no other than you; it is His consideration and compassion for you, that He has made us, your brethren, His legates and ministers of reconciliation.

This is what the world cannot understand; not that it does not apprehend clearly enough that we are by nature of like passion with it; but what it is so blind, so narrow-minded as not to comprehend, is, that, being so like itself by nature, we are so different by grace. Men of the world, my brethren, know the power of nature; they know not, experience not, believe not the power of God's grace; and since they are not themselves acquainted with any power that can overcome nature, they think that none exists, and therefore consistently, they believe that every one, Priest or not, remains to the end such as nature made him, and they will not believe it possible that any one can lead a supernatural life. Now, not Priest only, but every one who is inhabited by God's grace, leads a supernatural life; more or less supernatural, according to his calling, and the measure of the gifts given him; and his faithfulness to them. This they know not, and admit not; and when they hear of a life which a Priest must lead by his profession from youth to age, they will not credit that he is what he professes to be. They know nothing of the protection of God, the merits of Christ, the intercession of Mary; of the virtue of recurring prayers, of frequent confession, of daily Masses; they are strangers to the transforming power of the Most Holy Sacrament, the Bread of Angels; they do not contemplate the efficacy of salutary rules, of holy companions, of long enduring habits, of ready spontaneous vigilance, of abhorrence of sin, and indignation at the tempter, to secure the soul from evil. They only know that when the tempter once has actually penetrated into the heart, he is irresistible; they only know that there is (so to speak) a necessity of sinning when the soul has exposed and surrendered itself to his malice. They only know that when God has abandoned it, and good Angels are withdrawn, and all safeguards, and protections, and preventives are neglected, that then (which is their case,) when the victory is all but gained already, it is sure to be gained altogether. They themselves have ever, in their best estate, been all but beaten by the Evil One before they began to fight; this is the only state they have experienced; they know this, and they know nothing else. They have never stood on vantage ground; they have never been within the walls of the strong city, about which the enemy prowls in vain, into which he cannot penetrate, and outside of which the faithful soul will be too wise to venture. They judge, I say, by their experience, and will not believe what they never knew.

If there be those here present, my dear brethren, who will not believe that grace is effectual within the Church, because it does little outside of it, to them I do not speak: I speak to those who do not narrow their belief to their experience; I speak to those who admit that grace can make human nature what it is not; and such persons, I think, will feel it, not a cause of jealousy and suspicion, but a great gain, a great mercy, that those are sent to preach to them, to receive their confessions, and to advise them, who can sympathise with their sins, though they have not known them. Not a temptation, my brethren, can befall you but what befalls all those who share your nature, though you have yielded to it, and they have not. They can understand you, they can anticipate you, they can interpret you, though they have not kept pace with you in your course. They will be tender to you, they will "instruct you in the spirit of meekness," as the Apostle says, "considering themselves lest they also be tempted." Come then unto us, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest to your souls; come unto us, who now stand yet in Christ's stead, and who speak in Christ's Name; for we too, like you, have been saved by Christ's all-saving blood. We too, like you, should be lost sinners, unless Christ had had mercy on us, unless His grace had cleansed us, unless His Church had received us, unless His Saints had interceded for us. Be ye saved as we have been saved; "come, listen, all ye that fear God, and we will tell you what He hath done for our soul." Listen to our testimony; behold our joy of heart, and increase it by partaking in it yourselves. Choose that good part which we have chosen; join ye yourselves to our company; it will never repent you, take our word for it, who have a right to speak, it will never repent you to have sought pardon and peace from the Catholic Church, which alone has grace, which alone has power, which alone has Saints; it will never repent you, though you go through trouble, though you have to give up much for her sake. It will never repent you, to have passed from the shadows of sense and time, and the deceptions of human feeling and false reason, to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And O, my brethren, when you have taken the great step, and stand in your blessed lot, as sinners reconciled to the Father you had offended, (for I will anticipate, what I surely trust will be as regards many of you,) O then forget not those who have been

the ministers of our reconciliation; and as they now pray you to make your peace with God, so do you, when reconciled, pray for them, that they may gain the great gifts of perseverance, that they may continue to stand in the grace in which they stand now, even till the hour of death, lest, perchance, after they have preached to others, they themselves become reprobate.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

UNITED STATES.

IMPORTANT PASTORAL.

(From the Boston Pilot.)

JOHN, BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE APPOINTMENT OF THE HOLY SEE, BISHOP OF BUFFALO. To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Buffalo. Grace and Peace through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

After a laborious voyage, during which, occupied solely with what might tend to the sanctification of souls; seeking, therefore, neither consolation nor rest; not turning aside for a moment, to inspect the wonders of nature or of art, we return to you, our beloved flock, commissioned by the successor of St. Peter, to impart to you his most affectionate and paternal benediction; bringing also with us, from the centre of Catholic unity, graces and favors, bestowed under circumstances that give higher value to the gift; bestowed with the affectionate expressions of a most generous heart, which forgot present anxieties, to enter with fatherly love, into the minutest detail of what might concern your welfare.

Would to God! dearest beloved! that we could make sensible to each one of you, the sublime scene, which Providence placed before your Bishop, at St. John Lateran's in Rome, amidst more than 20,000 persons, clergy and laity of all ranks, we, kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, and being close to the kneeling Pontiff, saw the tears flow copiously down his venerable and saintly countenance, noticed tears dimming the eyes of many around and, felt the deep sympathy which united the sheep and the lambs of Christ's flock with their visible Pastor, in his sacrament of love, was raised to bless the weeping Pontiff and his sympathising flock, we felt, in manner never to be forgotten, the oneness of truth, of sympathy, and love, which unites, in participation of his own divine life, all the members of the mystic body of Christ. The faithful rejoiced as though they felt the presence of the Lord, confirming Peter, and calming the storms that beset his bark. We, too, touched by the sentiments of faith, of resignation, of gratitude, and of love, which united the hearts of the weeping Pontiff, the sympathising crowd, and our own, unworthy as it was of such communion, with Jesus in His ever blessed sacrament, begged and obtained, on that evening, a plenary indulgence, which will lead millions to the Lord's Table, in gratitude to the Eternal Pastor for protecting His Vicar on earth; and, through the wide world, give them to feel, what was felt at Rome; and to praise God in and through the same adorable Victim.

We give you here, beloved brethren, the words of our petition, and the words of the restored Pontiff, in which the indulgence was granted.

"For the salvation of souls, and in honor of the Sovereign Pontiff's happy return to his dominions; the Bishop of Buffalo, who, for many years, has had opportunities of esteeming the great good, which the Society of the Propagation of the Faith procures, most humbly begs the Holy Father to grant a plenary indulgence to the associates of that good work, who, in gratitude to God for protecting the visible Head of the Church, will worthily receive, on any day of their choice, before Christmas, the Holy Sacrament of Penance, and of the Eucharist, and pray according to the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff."

The pious desire which we, and very many of our clergy and laity expressed, that this new Diocese should have, for special patron, the glorious patriarch St. Joseph, has been fully approved by the successor of St. Peter. The Spouse of our Lord's most holy Mother is henceforth the Patron Saint of the Diocese of Buffalo. No octave can be celebrated in Lent,—the 19th of March can then have no octave; hence the Patronal Festival is fixed, by the Holy See, for the third Sunday after Easter, on the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph. This festival will henceforth be celebrated in this Diocese under the rite of Duplex of the first class, with Octave. We hereby enjoin all pastors, on or before the second Sunday after Easter, to exhort their flock, to celebrate devoutly this Festival, inviting them to receive the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast or during the Octave, and informing them that a plenary indulgence may thus be gained.

His Holiness has also granted our petition, and named St. Vincent of Paul, Secondary Patron of this Diocese. We exhort you then beloved, to a special devotion to this Saint whose unbounded charity was such, that even the enemies of all revelation erected statues to his memory under the title of "Hero of Humanity." But, far higher and holier is the title of Vincent of Paul; it is that of the mild, meek, humble imitator of the Good Samaritan, of Jesus, the God of Mercy! The 19th of July, Feast of St. Vincent of Paul, will henceforth be celebrated, in this Diocese, under the rite of Duplex of the second class, with an Octave.

The Vicar of Jesus Christ expressed the warmest interest in the works of charity by which here, as in other countries, the Church of God shows herself the spouse of incarnate mercy. He spoke in warmest commendation of the Hospital and of the Orphan Asylums, which by the charitable co-operation of many whom God will reward, we have established. To the good Samaritan Society, founded principally to aid the sick poor in the Hospital, His Holiness has granted, that each member may yearly gain four ple-

nary indulgences on any four days of the year, at choice. We exhort you, dearly beloved, to profit by this grace, and may you, in communing with the Victim of Charity, acquire more and more the Spirit of the God of Mercy, of Him who is the Father of the poor and of the orphan.

In consequence of a short Retreat which we preached on board the Flag-ship of our fleet in the Bay of Naples, we obtained from the Sovereign Pontiff, for the Sailors and Soldiers in the United States Army and Navy, a dispensation of the law of abstinence; in consequence of which Sailors or Soldiers in the service of our country, need abstain from flesh meat only on six days of the year, viz.: the three last days of Lent, Ash Wednesday, and the Vigils of Christmas, and the Assumption; Servants and families living with the dispensed have also a right to the dispensation.

Highly gifted ladies of the Sacred Heart have been granted to our prayers; they will give new impulse and power to the instruction of female youth in the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Buffalo. We have also found German clergymen, full of learning, and burning with holy zeal, to impart spiritual consolation to the beloved and esteemed portion of our flock, who speak the German language. Nor will we omit the good supply of Sacred vases and vestments, of books, of paintings, &c., by which we shall be enabled to add to the decency and solemnities of Divine Worship.

And now, beloved brethren, grateful to the God of Mercy, who heard your prayer for your Bishop, and who sent his angel to protect him, going hence and returning hither, we treat you to join with us in thanks to our Almighty protector and benefactor; for this we ordain, that, on the first Sunday after the reception of this Pastoral, the Collect "Pro Gratiarum Actione," be added to the Mass, and be continued for three days; and that after Vespers, or, if more convenient, after Mass, the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament be given, and the Te Deum sung.

We have, also, to thank a merciful Providence for the generous and Christian spirit manifested by clergy and laity; in observing our last request, "to bear one another's burdens," to support patiently inconveniences that might arise during our absence, lest rumors of trouble at home, might add too heavily to the trials and labors of your Bishop abroad. Indeed, but one exception to this blessing need be noticed: We beg your prayers both for those who have caused the trouble, and for us, that God may enable us to remedy the evil.

That we might be certain to enact in our Diocesan Synod, only what God wills; we would not print the Decrees until we have submitted it to the Oracle of Peter; encouraged by the approbation of Rome, and even by the kindest encomiums, we now prepare to publish "The Decrees of the Diocesan Synod of Buffalo." Each pastor will be furnished with a copy, and will read to his congregation the ordinances of discipline which regard the flock.

And now, beloved brethren, imparting to you the Apostolic Benediction, we received for you, from the successor of St. Peter, we here will repeat to you the very words of that venerable "servant of the servants of God," as found in his two Encyclics, of 8th Dec. 1849, and of 20th May, 1850.

Addressing the Bishops, the Pope says: "Let the faithful people remember that Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, whose dignity faileth not, even in his unworthy successor, here lives and presides. Let them remember that Christ the Lord hath placed in this chair of Peter, the unshaken foundation of His Church; and that He gives to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and that, 'He therefore prayed that his faith fail not, and commanded him to confirm his brethren; so that the successor of St. Peter holds the primacy over the whole world; is the true Vicar of Christ, Head of the whole Church, and Father and Doctor of all Christians. We desire to recommend to your fraternity the instruction and education of young clergymen; for the Church can have little hope of finding worthy ministers, except among those, who, from their youth, and their first age, have been formed into the holy ministry. Continue then, venerable brethren, to use all your resources, to put forth all your efforts, in order that the recruits of the sacred soldiery may, as far as is possible, be received in the Ecclesiastical Seminaries from their earliest years, and that, ranged round the tabernacle of the Lord, they may grow and increase, like a new plantation, in innocence of life, in religion, modesty, and the ecclesiastical Spirit, learning, at the same time, letters, the elementary and higher sciences, but, above all, sacred letters and sciences. But, assuredly, the younger portion of the laity ought also to be the object of your pastoral solicitude. Watch, then, venerable brethren, over all the other schools, public and private, and employ your influence, and use your efforts, that in those the studies be all in respects conformable to the rule of Catholic Doctrine, and that the youth assembled therein, whilst receiving instructions in letters, arts, and sciences, may have none but masters irreproachable, in respect to religion and morals, who, also, teaching them true virtue, may place them in a position of perceiving the snares set by the impious, of avoiding their miserable errors, and of serving usefully and honorably Christian and civil society. Be vigilant that in nothing, on no account, but especially in nothing that touches religion, any books be used in the schools, except those which are free from suspicion of error." Warn those who have the charge of souls to be your vigilant co-operators in all that concerns the schools of children and of youth of the first age. Let not the schools be confided to any but masters and mistresses of approved virtue. Addressing, all our venerable brethren of Christendom, shun in our solicitude, and congratulating them again upon the labors which they have nobly undergone for

Mat. xvi. Luke xxii.