

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.

THE CROSS



"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?" —*Trinitarian Prescrip* xlii.

"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 any other 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 hast this alone, but the Son of the living God.—*St. Cyril of Jerusalem. Cat. xi. 1.*

Calendar.

- JUNE 16—Saturday—St Philip Neri doub 2 class 26th of May.
- " 17—Sunday—III after Pent Office of the Sunday.
- " 18—Monday—Feast of the B V Mary help of Christians g doub 24th of May com of SS Marcus &c. Mm.
- " 19—Tuesday—St Juliana Falconeri V dou com of Ss Gervasius V Mm.
- " 20—Wednesday—St Sylvester P M doub.
- " 21—Thursday—St Aloysius of Gonzaga C doub.
- " 22—Friday—St Leo the Great I P C doub 11th of April com of St Paulinus B.
- " 23—Saturday—Vigil of St John the Bap St Julius I P C doub 19th of April.

PASTORAL LETTER.

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES ASSEMBLED IN THE SEVENTH PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, TO THE CLERGY AND FAITHFUL OF THEIR CHARGE.

Venerable brethren of the clergy, and beloved brethren of the laity:

In compliance with the Sacred Canons we have again assembled to deliberate on the general interests of religion in these United States, under the invocation of the Divine Spirit, whose guidance is specially promised to the pastors of the church. The known wishes of our Holy Father Pius IX. directed our attention in the first place to the more complete organization of our Hierarchy, which, when it shall have received his necessary sanction, will be made known to you. The temporary absence of the Pontiff from his See is not likely to occasion any extraordinary delay in the confirmation of our acts, since his personal energy, and the vigor of the Apostolic office have been strikingly manifested in the place of his exile. And here, brethren, we cannot withhold the expression of our sentiments in regard to the events which marked the brief period which has elapsed since he was raised to the pontificate. Although the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and the successor of Peter has of divine right no temporal dominion, yet through the magnificence of Christian princes, and the spontaneous acts of a people redeemed from bondage by the paternal influence of the Bishop of Rome, a small principality has been attached, during more than a thousand years, to the Holy See under the name of Patrimony of St. Peter. Finding himself charged with the duties of temporal governor, in consequence of his election to the office of Chief Bishop of the Catholic Church, his Holiness commenced his civil administration by acts of clemency, and by measures of a liberal policy, directed to improve the social condition of his subjects. These concessions elicited, as might have been expected, unbounded expressions of gratitude from the people of the Roman States, and won the admiration and applause of the whole civilized world. We need not say what a return has been made for this enlightened and spontaneous policy. Willingly would we persuade ourselves that the outrages committed against his authority are to be ascribed to the desperate machinations of a small number of abandoned men. As we are not subject to him as a temporal ruler, and as we are devotedly attached to the republican institutions under which we live, we feel ourselves to be impartial judges of the events which have resulted in his flight from his capital, and of the

subsequent attempts to strip him of all civil power: yet as friends of order and liberty, we cannot but lament that his enlightened policy has not been suffered to develop itself, and that violence and outrage have disgraced the proceedings of those who proclaim themselves the friends of social progress: we must at the same time avow our conviction, that the temporal principality of the Roman States has served, in the order of Divine Providence, for the free and unsuspecting exercise of the spiritual functions of the Pontificate, and for the advancement of the interests of religion, by fostering institutions of charity, and of learning. Were the Bishop of Rome the subject of a civil ruler, or the citizen of a republic, it might be feared that he would not always enjoy that freedom of action which is necessary that his decrees and measures be respected by the faithful throughout the world. We know indeed, that if at any time it pleased God to suffer him to be permanently deprived of all civil power, He will divinely guard the free exercise of his spiritual authority, as was the case during the first three ages, under the reign of the Pagan emperors, when the Bishops of Rome displayed an apostolic energy, which was every where felt and respected. On account of the principal attachment to the Church of Rome from the beginning, as founded by the glorious apostles Peter and Paul, every local church, that is, all Christians in every part of the world, felt bound to harmonize in faith with that most ancient and illustrious Church, and to cherish inviolably her communion. The Successor of Peter, even under circumstances so unfavourable, watched over the general interests of religion in Asia and Africa, as well as in Europe, and authoritatively proscribed every error opposed to divine revelation, and every usage pregnant with danger to its integrity.

The pontifical office is of divine institution and totally independent of all the vicissitudes to which the temporal principality is subject. When Christ our Lord promised to Peter that He would build His Church on him as on a rock, He gave him the assurance that the gates of hell, that is, the powers of darkness, should nor prevail against it, which necessarily implies that his office is fundamental and essential to the Church, and must continue to the end of time. Peter was constituted pastor of the lambs and sheep, namely, of the whole flock of Christ, which through him is one fold under one shepherd. Our Lord at His last supper prayed that His disciples, and those who through their ministry should believe in Him, might be one, even as He and the Father are one. and as He is always heard, we cannot doubt that this unity is an inseparable characteristic of the Church, whence the office of Chief Pastor, by which unity is maintained, can never cease. We exhort you, brethren, to continue steadfast in your attachment to the Chair of Peter, on which you know that the Church was built. Since it has pleased Divine Providence to establish that Chair in the city of Rome—the capital of the Pagan world—in order to show forth, in the most striking manner, the power of Christ, he is a schismatic and prevaricator who attempts to establish any other Chair in opposition to the Roman See, or independent of it.

That Church was consecrated by the martyrdom of the apostles Peter and Paul, who bequeathed to her their whole doctrine with their blood. Christ our Lord has placed the doctrine of truth in the Chair of unity, and has charged Peter and his successors to confirm their brethren, having prayed specially that the faith of Peter may not fail. By

means of the uninterrupted tradition of that Church, coming down through the succession of Bishops from the apostles, we confound those who through pride, self-complacency, or any other perverse influence, teach otherwise than divine revelation warrants, and attempt to adulterate the doctrine, which, as pure streams from an unpolluted fountain, flows thence throughout the whole world.

Under the circumstances of peculiar difficulty in which the Chief Bishop is placed by the temporary privation of his temporal dominions and of the revenues annexed to them, it becomes all the children of the Church to give evidence of sincere sympathy by contributing of their worldly substance to enable them to meet the extraordinary expenses which the government of the Church imposes on him. Since the Holy See has watched over the churches of these States with maternal solicitude, and has fed us with the milk of pure doctrine as new-born infants, giving us gratuitously all that was necessary to lead us to the maturity of Christian virtue, it becomes us who have received spiritual things from her disinterested charity, to furnish the exiled Pontiff with temporal things in the time of his distress and affliction. At the instance of the Most Reverend, Bishop of Baltimore, we have graciously you to wish, a free offerings towards his relief, and have for this purpose appointed the first Sunday of July, being within the octave of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, for a general collection in all the churches of the United States. Let every one of you brethren, put apart with himself, laying up what it may well please him, that he may present his gift as a token of his attachment to the Chief Pastor. Let the collections made on the day already mentioned be transmitted without delay to the respective Bishops of each diocese, who will forward the same to the Metropolitan of Baltimore, for the purpose of being placed at the disposal of our Holy Father, in testimony of the sympathy of all his spiritual children in these States, and as a contribution to his support.

The repeated solicitations of Bishops from various parts of the Church, presented to the Apostolic See, have moved his Holiness to address all his colleagues, for council in regard to the definition of the doctrine, that the Mother of our Lord was preserved by divine grace from all stain of original sin. This has hitherto been considered as a pious belief, which derived strength and sanction from the solemnity in honor of her Conception, celebrated during several ages throughout the whole Church. In the East it was observed as early as the fifth century, under the title of the conception of Saint Anne, the mother of the holy Virgin, although it is not known to have been introduced into the West before the ninth century. Every where throughout the whole Church from the earliest period, Mary was styled holy and immaculate, as is evident from the liturgical books and from the writings of the Fathers. Saint Ephrem of Syria, in the fourth century, proclaimed her purity and sanctity to be far greater than that of the most sublime spirits that surround the throne of God, since it is her singular privilege to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate. "She is," he says, "an immaculate and undefiled Virgin, incorrupt and chaste, and altogether free from all defilement and stain of sin, the spouse of God—the Virgin Mother of God, inviolate, holy, and entirely pure and chaste, holier than the Seraphs, and incomparably more glorious than all the celestial hosts." Although the attention of

the Church in the early ages was specially fixed on the mystery of the Incarnation, and her authority was employed chiefly against the destructive heresies that directly assailed it, yet the honor of the Virgin Mother was vindicated whenever it came in question. When Nestorius endeavoured to divide Christ, ascribing to His human nature a distinct personality, the great Council of Ephesus, in proscribing the novelty, proclaimed Mary the Mother of God, in conformity with the constant doctrine of all antiquity. Her perpetual virginity was subsequently declared, when denied by innovators. Her exemption from actual sin was stated by the holy Council of Trent, in a definition of faith; and the same venerable authority designated her "immaculate," in a declaration annexed to the canons, regarding original sin. These fathers declare that it is not their intention to include the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary in these degrees, but that the constitutions of Pope Xystus IV. on this point are to be observed. This Pontiff, in consequence of disputes raised concerning her Conception, has found it necessary to forbid under heavy penalties, the branding as heresy either the pious sentiment, or the contradictory opinion. It happened in regard to this point, as on many other occasions, as to the tradition and faith of the Church. The disputes which arose on this subject were tolerated by her with that consideration and patience with which the conflict of sentiment in regard to the necessity of the ceremonial observances was suffered in the first Council of Jerusalem, until the voice of Peter terminated the discussion. She abstained from pronouncing judgment whilst the excitement prevailed, content with the protestations of the contending parties of unreserved submission to her authority, and leaving every proof and every difficulty to be maturely canvassed, and to be weighed in the scales of the sanctuary. Whilst the Pontiffs allowed to theologians the right of private investigation, they were careful to maintain the use of celebrating the festival, and forbade under heavy penalties, any public expression of sentiment derogatory to the belief which the faithful piously cherished.

Since the divine Scriptures teach that all men sinned in Adam, and that we are by nature children of wrath, the Virgin Mary, as his natural descendant, would have incurred the common penalty, had not she been preserved from it by divine grace. The Angel Gabriel assured her that she had found grace with God, and saluted her as full of grace. She was declared blessed among women, both by the heavenly messenger, and by her cousin Elizabeth speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. St. Irenaeus represents her as repaying by her obedience the evils brought on mankind by the disobedience of the mother of the human family. Her exemption from the general malediction may be inferred from the fact, that she was chosen to be Mother of our Redeemer, whose body was formed of her substance. St. Augustine speaking of actual sin, which, in the strongest terms, he ascribed to every child of Adam, observed that he must not be understood to include the Virgin Mother, concerning whom he would suffer no thought to be entertained when sin was in question, for the honor of our Lord, "for we know," he says, "that grace was bestowed on her to overcome sin in every respect, since she was chosen to conceive and bring forth Him who was utterly free from sin." Guided by this most just principle we can interpret the general assertions of the fathers without prejudice to the Blessed One,

*Orat. in Sa. Dei Genitricis