

PASTORAL LETTER.

His Lordship the Bishop of Valleyfield on the Church.

JOSEPH EDWARD EMARD, by the Grace of God and the Apostolic See, Bishop of Valleyfield.

To the Secular and Regular Clergy, to the Religious Communities and to all the Faithful of our Diocese, health and Benediction in the Lord.

My DEARLY BELIEVED BRETHREN:—

We are now entering upon the holy season of Lent. In the early days of Christianity, in commemoration of the forty days passed in the desert by our Lord previously to entering upon the labors of His public life, the Church specially dedicated to fasting, abstinence and prayer a season of equal length immediately preceding the Pascal solemnity in each year. She wished by that means to enable her children to comply with the great divine law of penance and to aid and suitably prepare them for the celebration of the Feast of Easter. At first the discipline observed was rigorous in the extreme but the faithful, animated by the liveliest faith and filled with a generous love of God, submitted willingly to its severity. But as time went on this fervor began to diminish, and the energies of the people decreasing, the Church, with the tenderness of a mother for her children, gradually lessened the burden, so that the fast of to-day, even if all held strictly to it, bears little resemblance to that of the early ages. The rules for its observance are more modified for the present year by virtue of a decree of the Holy See, on account of the severe sickness which has prevailed in recent years, and in consequence of which the general health of the people is still affected. My beloved brethren, you ought to appreciate this maternal love which fits itself to our wants and proportions the burden of penance to the shoulders for which it is intended. But it would be a grave error to think that in dispensing with a greater or lesser extent from fasting and abstinence, the Church can at the same time exempt you from the universal and immutable divine law of penance. On the contrary, the less severe her commands, the more strictly you should conform to her laws, remembering that for all, penance is an indispensable condition of salvation—"unless you do penance you shall all perish" (Luke xiii, 5). You should apply yourselves, then, during the coming Lent, in an especial manner, to lead a life of mortification, which you will sanctify by prayer and render doubly meritorious by the giving of alms. It is not enough to weep for our sins, we must feed our souls on the great truths which should guide us in the exercise of our duties. It is with this idea that we have thought it opportune to direct your attention during this holy season of Lent to a point of fundamental doctrine and of great actual importance, in which, as true and pious Catholics, you should take special interest. We are going to speak to you, my dear brethren, on the subject of "The Church." What we desire to say to you, you already know; but in recalling it to your minds at a time when our common Mother is so violently attacked on all sides, we hope to stir up the filial affection of your hearts, so that you will extend to her the consoling influence of your attachment and submission.

"The Word Was Made Flesh and Dwelt Amongst Us." (John i.)

This Man God, Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, by the mysterious operation of the Holy Ghost, led a mortal life on earth given up entirely to the work of redeeming mankind. By His labors, His sufferings and His death on the cross, He victimized Himself for our sakes and wiped out by His voluntary expiation the decree which condemned the descendants of the first man to eternal perdition. (Coloss. i, 14.) Everything, however, was not accomplished for the Saviour by the great sacrifice of Calvary. The price of our ransom was thenceforth, it is true, placed in the hands of the God of all justice, but, to use the language of Saint Thomas of Aquin, by "the efficacy of the death of Jesus Christ, the whole cause of our salvation remained suspended, so long as it was not applied to each of us." According to the order laid down by the Redeemer himself, he should continue the general work of salvation under a precise form for the good of each. He brought on earth truth with grace to keep His doctrine, to make it known and to distribute its supernatural riches to all; He founded the Church; to this Church He confided, with the safe-keeping of an authority with which He would continue for ever, the treasury of His teachings, those sources of living waters which engender, nourish and consummate, all virtue and holiness and are called the Sacraments. This Church, in a general way, is the gathering together in one distinct society, of all those who, by Divine Mercy, have been called to serve God by professing Christianity. You are, my dearly beloved brethren, members, children of the Church of Jesus Christ; it is because this title is dear to you, because it assures you precious advantages and im-

poses important duties upon you, that we desire to retrace its origin, its essential characteristics, its beneficial action on the soul and on the world.

II.

In the course of His preachings, our Lord Jesus Christ had formally promised to establish a Church for himself, against which the powers of hell should wage war forever. "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi, 18.) This solemn and distinct promise the Divine Saviour accomplished to the letter by instituting the apostolic ministry. He chose some of his disciples, brought them together and placed them under the authority of one of their number; he gave them a mission similar to that which he received from His Father and invested it with the triple power of governing, teaching and sanctifying mankind. "As My Father sent Me so I send you: all power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things as I have taught you, and behold I am with you to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 19; Luke x, 16.) Reserving to him who shall be at their head absolute and universal power to feed his lambs and his sheep, and delivering to him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, he gives to all under his control power to bind and loose souls, to forgive or retain sins, to teach His doctrine, obliging all to hear, and obey, as they would Himself. "He who hears you hears Me, and he who despiseth you despiseth Me." (Luke x, 16.) He who hears not the Church let him be to you as the heathen and publican." (Matt. xviii, 17.) Is not that, my dear brethren, to institute, to organize a religious society, first to be formed, of all those who shall believe in the truth brought down from Heaven by Jesus Christ, communicated through a special ministry which shall render to God the homage prescribed by means of an ordered ritual.

It is a supernatural society, since it claims to be the house of God. "The pillar and foundation of truth," (Timothy iii, 15) to save the world by the application of divine merits, to be the instrument of making men the adopted children of God, lifting them to become the living temples of the Holy Ghost and procuring for them grace in abundance. Jesus Christ wishes to remain the invisible head of this society, whose origin is not of this world, though it is composed of mortal men, no one being able to lay the edifice on any other foundation than that which has been laid, and that being Jesus Christ himself. (Cor. iii, 2.)

It is a perfect society, provided with a constitution wanting in nothing for its regular and constant working, and which by divine right is and always will be entirely independent of worldly power. It is complete in itself, comprising two distinct classes of members, the one charged with teaching, ruling, and sanctifying in their capacity as Ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God (Cor. iv, 1), the other receiving all the benefits of this triple ministry established in their favor, and to which they should submit. Distinction willed by our Lord and made permanent by the effects of a Sacrament, whose reception, with the character it imprints upon the soul, constitutes the hierarchical order amongst deacons, priests, and bishops. Jesus Christ made apostles of the one—of the other, pastors and doctors for the exercise of the ministry and for the edification of the body of Christ. (Cor. xii, 28.)

At the Head of this Organization is Peter,

as Chief Pastor, provided with two-fold supremacy and jurisdiction, for whom the Master especially prayed that his faith might never fail him, and who received the mission to confirm his brethren. Even death itself is powerless to sever the links which bind the members of this society together on earth, because even beyond this life the Church Militant accompanies and consoles with its prayers those of its children who, before entering the Kingdom of Heaven, may be required to pass through the crucible of expiation and to form the "Church Suffering," and further, because she participates in the joys of the "Church Triumphant" of the elect.

It is a society made necessary by the divine covenant which makes it an indispensable means of salvation and imposes on all men the strict obligation of being faithful members of it, if they wish to enjoy the benefits of redemption. No one could expect to attain to eternal happiness hereafter if he does not belong to the Church of Christ. Adorable decree! which, far from restraining or diminishing the action of divine mercy, on the contrary, assures its fuller effect. In a word, if it must be admitted on the one part, that it is not sufficient to be long ostensibly to what is called the body of the Church, to be saved; that God remains the sole judge who searcheth the reins and hearts (Apoc. ii, 23), and decides who is worthy of His love and who of His hatred (Eccl. ix, 1), and that He reserves to Himself at His pleasure, to separate the chaff from the wheat. (Matt. xiii, 30.) It must be acknowledged, on the other hand, that He alone knows the number of those who, in appearance, strangers to the outside organization, nevertheless belong to the soul of the Church by baptism, by faith freed from all serious doubt, by being in a constant state of grace preserved or regained by perfect love. Furthermore, because, according to the language of the Apostle, the Holy Spirit breathes and communicates itself where it pleases (John iii, 8), it can, if it so wishes, communicate to an infidel whose soul is right and whose heart is pure sufficient supernatural light to lead it to that baptism of desire which makes it in the eyes of God a child of the Church. "It belongs to divine Providence," said St. Thomas, "to provide every man with what is necessary for his salvation, provided he be not in a state of sin. If an infidel, a savage, living in the forest, follows out the inspiration of the natural law, to do good and avoid evil, it may be held as certain that Almighty God would reveal to him what it is necessary to believe, or that He would send him a preacher as in

times of yore. He sent Peter to Cornelius. It is not for us, then, by any means, to apply to any persons God's judgments—God knows those who belong to him—but in all cases without exception grace comes to man as the fruit of the merits of Jesus Christ, whose Church is its sole dispenser, whence follows the indispensable obligation of belonging not only to the soul of the Church by interior justice, but to its body also by exterior adherence, from the moment that it comes to the knowledge of men; all those who save themselves are saved by the Church, and out of the Church there is no Salvation.

To her, as to Him whose spouse she is, the mystic body, these words of the apostle may be applied: "No other name under heaven has been given to men whereby we can be saved." (Act iv, 12.)

This is why the Divine Founder in establishing it in the form of a society gives it a stability which guarantees it against any material alteration and assures its duration to the end of time. "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 20.)

"The Church," says St. Augustine, "will last as long as the sun; as long as the sun shall continue to rise and set,

and by the interior belief and exterior profession of the same faith under an infallible head, and embracing all the teachings of Jesus Christ, for with the heart we believe unto justice but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. x, 10). "I conjure you, my brethren," said St. Paul the apostle, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "to have all but one language and to suffer no schism amongst you, but to be all united in spirit and in sentiment" (1 Cor.). Let us, then, place our reliance in

Unity of Faith.

otherwise we become as children twisting and turning at every change of doctrine, victims of the malice and cunning of man—and always surrounded by error (Ephes. iv). This absolute unity in faith excluded the idea that the Church can be formed by the reunion of diverse groups bound together by any particular link, such, for instance, as the arbitrary preaching of the gospel. It rejects also the illusory distinction which it is sought to establish between fundamental articles of Christian doctrine and those which can be regarded as of secondary character. It condemns the theory of free examination by virtue of which each would have the right to be his own doctor and the judge of what he should believe by a personal and

any direct whatever, but essentially holy and without blemish" (Ephes. v). This vine divinely watered by the blood of Christ, whose branches can live only on this trunk, must possess a supernatural vigor giving forth marvellous fruits of virtue and holiness attaining to heroism. It is through it the Saviour fulfils his pledge to clothe the soul with a superabundance of grace (John x, 10); to spread the ardor of divine love and fraternal charity (John xiii, 34) through it He inspires the souls of His chosen ones with a fullness of love which leads them to make any sacrifice even to martyrdom (John xiii, 15); through it He brings them to renounce the world even to the extent of embracing poverty, completely abandoning its possessions (Matt. xix, 21); through it He brings them to embrace the virginial state and to a life of perfect chastity previously unknown in this world (Matt. v, 28). It is to His example (John xiii, 15) and under the influence of His Church that Christian obedience, looking to God as the principle of all authority, produces marvels of submission. In fine, in the bosom of the Church, by the grace of Jesus Christ, all virtue will be found to flourish amongst those of every condition and of all degrees in the social scale, each being called on to practice them and to draw around him the halo of

again the Apostle St. Paul. It is for this reason St. Augustine, and with him all tradition, does not hesitate to say that the true, the only Church, is that which spreads itself so far and wide throughout the universe and which continues extending itself to the most distant people.

IV.

In fine, by the express and formal wish of Jesus Christ, His Church has been established in a permanent manner on the Apostles on their mission, their authority and their doctrine preserved and transmitted indefinitely to their legitimate successors as a sacred and unalterable trust (2 Tim. i, 14). Every pastor of the Church, if he has entered by the door of the fold of Christ, wherever or whenever he exercises his ministry must link himself to the origin of this same Church—to the Apostles—whether by his own act and those who have preceded him in the same position or See, or through the medium of those from whom he obtained his credentials; and that by a constant succession easy to retrace, and which constitutes his sole indispensable title to the submission of his flock.

The words of St. Paul to the Christians of his time should be true in all places and at all times: "You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, united with Jesus Christ, who is the corner stone on which the whole edifice rears itself and grows till it becomes a temple dedicated to the Lord." And Scripture shows us in an actual manner this regular transmission from the Apostolic ministry: "Do thou then, my child, fortify thyself in the grace which is in Jesus Christ, and what thou hast heard from me before many witnesses make known to young men, who will themselves be able to instruct others thereon" (41); and as a peremptory reply to the presentations of ecclesiastics of their day, the Fathers of the primitive Church addressed these simple words: "Make known your origin; it is not apostolical. We refuse you all credit."

V.

Such, my dear brethren, are the essential properties and distinguishing characteristics of the true Church of Christ. By these striking features which shine so brilliantly in the royal diadem which the Saviour was pleased to place on the head of his spouse you have recognized from your childhood the holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church of which you have the happiness of being members. The centre of this Church is at Rome, the Eternal City, designed by God to become the principal See of St. Peter, guardian of the Supreme authority, and with which the Prince of the Apostles formed a perpetual alliance and sealed it with his blood. Rome has ever from that time been the See of the Vicar of Christ. The Pope lives in Rome to-day, he is Leo XIII. He was preceded by Pius IX. and Gregory XVI., and from century to century we trace back by means of an unbroken chain to him to whom the words were addressed: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church."

Like Peter himself, the Sovereign Pontiff, Bishop of Rome and Head of the Church, possesses supremacy of honor and jurisdiction which makes him the Bishop of Bishops, the pastor of pastors charged with feeding the lambs and the sheep, possessing for the universal good of his flock the great privilege of personal infallibility and charged with the mission of confirming and keeping his brethren in the true faith.

Around the Pope and attaching themselves to the Apostolic See by the direct tie of a regular vocation, and all acknowledging as their head Peter living in the person of his successor, are the bishops spread throughout the world—each at the head of a diocese in which he exercises directly, and with the aid of the priestly ministry, his duties as the pastor of souls, to govern, to teach, and to sanctify them. The priest who preaches to you is sent by your bishop, your bishop is named by the Pope, the Pope is the legitimate heir of Peter—Peter was chosen by Jesus Christ, the Divine Founder of the Church established to continue the work of the redemption of the world.

Is There Not In This Something Grand, something sublime, something divine? All tradition is unanimous in the doctrine which is resumed in these words: "Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia, (where Peter is, there also is the Church.) And this Roman Church, so firmly and so closely bound to its centre—to Peter—by a hierarchical organization which includes all its members, displays the most perfect unity in its working. It teaches to-day what it taught from the beginning, the doctrine of its Master, and this doctrine is the same everywhere. In all countries it offers up the same sacrifice, administers the same sacraments, recites the same prayers. If one of the faithful goes far away from home, no matter how far, no matter where he stops, he will find a church, a priest, subject to an episcopal jurisdiction granted by the Pope, and there he will assist at Mass as if he was at home; he will hear the same truths that he heard by his home fireside, he can sit with his Catholic brethren in the church, join in their prayers and go to the same communion rail. Here, again, we see the unity of Church exemplified.

"As only one sun shines for the whole world," said St. Irene, "so one only Church diffuses throughout the world the light which brightens souls and reveals the truth." This Roman Church, yours, my very dear brethren, does it command anything other than virtue? Does it not, through the ministry of its priests, preach the love of God, the observance of His divine law, and Christian submission to all legitimate authority? Does it not inculcate in our hearts, by its maternal action, faith, hope and charity? Does it not invite and exhort you to the practice of other virtues of a less elevated character, but yet capable of being of great merit, and of giving happiness by the sanctification of our daily actions; prudence, which, regulates our conduct; justice to God, our neighbor and ourselves; strength to support the soul in its often painful struggles; temperance, which, repudiating all excess, prompts us to use with piety the gifts of God. In order to sustain you in the battles of life, to keep your spiritual strength in good order, to cure your wounds and encourage the growth of grace in your hearts, does she not

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MGR. EMARD, BISHOP OF VALLEYFIELD.

that is to say, as long as the course of time itself shall last, the Church of God, that is to say, the Body of Christ, shall not disappear from the world." To this promise Jesus Christ joins that of doctrinal immutability and infallibility under the supreme power of Peter living in his successors. The spirit of all truth is given to the Church; it thus becomes trustee, judge, witness of revealed doctrine taught and professed by it with equal certainty. This, again, is the reason the Saviour surrounds this same society, which is His Church, with an éclat, a brilliancy, which make it visible within itself. It is composed not only of the just and predestined but of all those who, subject to the same authority, practice the Christian religion, following the exterior rites common to all; for the Church is the fold of Jesus Christ, whose pastors are easily recognized, the house of the Lord which is seen on the high ground (John ii, 2), and which the prophet had long described as a city established on the highest mountain and making itself seen from afar (Matt. v, 14).

III.

That each one might be able to recognize it easily amongst all the sects that the spirit of error or revolt were certain to raise against it, Jesus Christ imprinted on His Church certain distinctive characteristics all her own which could belong to her alone and would be sufficient to ensure to her the faithful adherence of sincere souls. The first of these is unity, the recognized sign of truth and invincible power which the Divine Author of the Church has imprinted forever on His work (Leo XIII). And, first, there is not, there never can be, any other than the one Church. "I will build my Church." It is, therefore, absolutely idle to try to persuade oneself or to make others believe that these several societies were established by Jesus Christ. Has he not declared that there is but one fold and one shepherd, and does not the Apostle affirm that there is but one faith and one baptism, as there is but one Lord? (Eph. iv, 3.) That is not all. In the very bosom of this only Church, Jesus Christ, having affirmed that every kingdom divided against itself shall be destroyed, establishes the reign of perfect unity of intel-

varying interpretation and alteration of the scriptures, considered as the sole foundation of Christian faith. This unity which Jesus Christ gave his Church shows itself in the exercises of a worship which is at all times and in all places the same, and which centre in a sacrifice which perpetuates that of Calvary, and Sacraments which are the channels of grace and sources of sanctity for all. The unity of the Church is preserved by the hierarchical tie and dependence, through whose agency, wherever the faithful are, they are subject to their immediate pastors, under the more general direction of bishops, who, themselves, must be attached to a common centre, obeying, with their flocks, a supreme chief, the successor and heir to the prerogatives of the Prince of the Apostles and Vicar of Jesus Christ, the true head of His mystic body. Christ is the head through whom the whole body is united and bound together in all its parts, which give each other a mutual support proportionate to each member, thus receiving its development, and growing in change.

Such is the unity that Jesus Christ desired, which He asked for His Church in a sublime prayer: "Holy Father, keep together in your name those you have given me, that they may be like unto you." I ask, not only for them, but also for those who ought to believe in Me by their word, that all may be as one, as you, my Father, are in Me and I in you, they may be one in you, that they may be consummated in unity" (John xvii, 11).

With Unity an Admirable Perfection is Given to the Church.

a reflection of that which exists in one only God, one only Mediator, whose strength and beauty the Fathers of the Church have drawn out and the Divine Saviour has stamped with the seal of sanctity. Yes, my dear brethren, the Church should be holy which Jesus Christ, the source of all holiness, established for the purpose of sanctifying and saving mankind, that Church which He so loved, said the Apostle, as to deliver Himself up, that, to make it holy by purifying and washing it with the waters of the word of life, He wished by this means to have a Church beautiful without spot or stain or

sanctify (Matt. v, 16), to make known before men the Church of which he is a member, for it is a Church which should bring forth a nation of saints (Peter ii, 9). And as the complement and corollary of the sanctity prevailing in the Church through that of its children, Jesus Christ has promised to add the lasting gift of miracles as a manifest proof of His assistance. He that believeth in Me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do (John xiv, 12). Let me add, my dear brethren, that the Church has been instituted to apply to mankind the full benefit of redemption; as a consequence, and according to the intentions of its Founder, it ought to possess within itself a power of expansion whose only limits shall be those of the world itself—and in fact being superior to any and every sect assuming the name of Christian, it should by degrees, with divine assistance, extend its empire so as to merit the title of Catholic, that is to say, universal. It should not be the Church of any particular race, country or epoch.

Its Mission is to Make the Gospel Known to All People.

to preach the truth to all—to draw to it, and to lead to God all those who have been redeemed, that is to say, all men. Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths (Isaiah ii, 3). Jesus Christ, head of His Church, is that rod of Jesse which lifts itself up as a rallying sign amongst the people and all nations shall seek it; (Isaiah xi, 1) where I shall have been raised upon the earth I shall draw all to me said he, and it is remarkable that the very title surmounting the Cross of Calvary should have been written in the three languages which then represented the known world; and on the day of Pentecost, on going out to the Cenacle, the gift of tongues the Apostles possessed enabled them at once to make themselves understood by the many strange people scattered around, thus allowing the Church to take its title of Catholic from its very cradle; and until it shall have carried out its universal mission, all nations which shall not have been gathered to its bosom shall be in darkness, says