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THE CATHOLIC FAITH

BY

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ST. LOUIS, MO., 1915

PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER

17 SOUTH BROADWAY

FREIBURG (BADEN)
GERMANY

68, GREAT RUSSELL STR.
LONDON, W. C.

St. Louis, Mo.
Feast of St. Alphonsus,
August 2, 1915.

IMPRIMATUR

THOS. P. BROWN, C. SS. R.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Sti. Ludovici, die 29, Sept. 1915

F. G. HOLWECK,
Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR

Sti. Ludovici, die 1, Oct. 1915

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Archiepiscopus
Sti. Ludovici.

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PREFACE

This pamphlet contains the author's articles on "Faith" which appeared in *The Liguorian*, a monthly periodical published by the Fathers of the Redemptorist Seminary at Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. They are now given to the public in deference to the wishes of competent persons who believe that their publication in pamphlet form will contribute to enlighten not only Catholics, but also many a sincere searcher for the *True Church*, founded by Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour.

To these articles are appended Suggestions to such non-Catholics as are sincerely endeavoring to find the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CATHOLIC FAITH

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

“The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say: Come, 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 shall walk in His paths.” (Is. 2, 2-3.)

There exists an Institution spread over the whole world, found in every region, in every clime. It has numerous members among every nation, however civilized or barbarous. These members are so closely united together, as to be of one mind and form but one family. This Institution, far from interfering with man’s liberty, material progress or prosperity, is their truest friend. It is despised and reviled by many, hated, dreaded and persecuted by others; whilst by the most intelligent and virtuous portion of mankind it is cherished and revered as the most sublime of institutions.



This Institution is not of yesterday ; it has witnessed the rise and fall of many an empire, and repeatedly beheld the most solidly established human institutions decay and crumble to dust. In every age of its existence it has been persecuted with the utmost violence and obstinacy. Every means that both human and satanic ingenuity could devise, has again and again been tried in vain to overthrow and destroy it. Nay, at times, efforts so powerful and so well organized have been made to overpower it, that it seemed absolutely unable to escape destruction ; but at the very moment when its further existence is deemed perfectly hopeless, it rises triumphantly without apparent effort and with renewed vigor, and so utterly crushes its foes as to obliterate almost every vestige of them. .

Time, so hostile to and destructive of all human works, whilst spreading decay amongst everything great and solid around this Institution, seems to leave no impress upon it, for it is now, in spite of its age, as young, as fresh, as vigorous as ever.

From its very inception it has reckoned among its members the world's brightest intellects and noblest hearts. Millions of its followers of every rank, age and sex have constantly practised the most heroic virtues and exercised the most enduring fortitude ever witnessed.

Its foundation, propagation and preservation have been effected by means naturally ill-adapted to the

end, and in a manner opposed to all human prudence and foresight.

It has abolished the most absurd doctrines, substituting therefor the most sublime truths. It has extirpated from society the most shameful and licentious customs, planting in their stead virtues most noble and superhuman. It has put an end to the most degrading slavery, teaching mankind the principles of true liberty.

It has created and reared the most wonderful and beneficent institutions for the relief of every human ill and sorrow. A large number of its members, forgetful of self and of all worldly advantages and comforts, and animated by a hitherto unheard-of spirit of self-sacrifice, have devoted and still devote their whole life to the alleviation of every misery to which flesh is heir. This Institution has thereby deservedly acquired the title of mankind's greatest benefactor.

This Institution, although *in* this world, is not *of* this world; for it rises far above and far beyond it. It inspires its members with detachment from this earth's vain and transitory goods and enjoyments, inducing them to aspire only to godlike things. It elevates the mind of man by discovering to it truths of a higher order, and ennobles his heart by creating therein a longing desire for the purest joys of endless bliss.

This Institution, like "a mountain placed on the top of mountains," is visible to all who wish to see. Noth-

ing is more prominent in this world ; it can be seen and, in some manner, touched everywhere and by everybody. There is no danger of its being mistaken for something else, or of something else being taken for it. Therefore, no one can allege a lawful excuse for not knowing or seeing it.

Its members, composed of so many nationalities, and moved by such varied objects and aspirations, are but one in mind and heart, for they all believe alike, consider themselves as forming but one body and tend to the same final destiny.

Though so vast in its expanse and membership, its government is most perfect. There is only one head to rule and direct this immense body. A helpless old man stands at the helm, safely guiding the great ship through even the most fearful and protracted storms, to the violence of which every other craft would become an easy prey.

This old man, in some manner, never dies. Although bereft of all worldly power, yet no mortal is more formidable than he. Although he employs no material force, yet no one on earth is more dreaded than he by the greatest conquerors, and no one is so sure of victory. However mighty his foes, however violent and prolonged the struggle, that old man always, without any apparent human agency, succeeds in humbling and overcoming his adversaries. His most inveterate enemies, though hating him with intense

hate, cannot, in their candid moments, withhold from him the tribute of their respect and admiration.

This grand and noble Institution is the CATHOLIC CHURCH, founded by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to impart the fruits and blessings of His Redemption to all mankind, by teaching them the truths of salvation, making known to them their obligations, and providing them with the means of fulfilling them and thereby attaining heavenly bliss.

The old man at the head of the Church, or Christ's ship, is the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, who, endowed with supernatural light and superhuman strength and fortitude, has hitherto overcome every obstacle, triumphed over every foe, and safely guided the ship of the Church through every storm without wavering, without faltering. He now rules gloriously over the minds and hearts of the most enlightened portion of mankind.

FAITH

“He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be condemned” (Mark 16, 16). “He that believeth not, is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3, 18).

To our age of boasted tolerance these two sayings of our divine Saviour appear harsh, intolerant, incredible,

and unjust. And yet nothing can be more true or more just, for they are the utterances of Him, who is the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge of the universe. The sovereign Lord of creation has laid down the law of faith; He has sanctioned it by appropriate rewards and punishments, making it obligatory on all men under pain of eternal reprobation. He cannot be charged with excessive rigor or injustice, for He is the infinitely good God, that is, goodness itself, and the infinitely just God, that is, justice itself. There can, then, be no other alternative; either we must believe and believe as Christians, or, if we refuse to believe, we shall be justly doomed to endless punishment.

True Christian faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. It is only by faith that we can approach and please God. "Without faith," says St. Paul, "it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him" (Hebr. 11.6). He who *knowingly* rejects the faith, is guilty of a very grievous sin, because he rejects as untrue the word and testimony of God Himself, and thus implicitly holds God as either ignorant or deceitful. Moreover, by refusing to acquiesce in the divine testimony or revelation, he actually rebels against the supreme authority of God and, therefore, deserves the condign punishment of a rebel. Leniency towards such a one would

practically nullify the authority of God and make it the sport of the proud and wicked.

Christian faith is, therefore, indispensable for salvation. It is the door of, or the entrance into, the Church of Christ. In beginning the ceremonies of baptism the priest addresses this question to the candidate for baptism: "What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" The candidate answers: "Faith." The priest then asks: "What doth faith bring thee to?" The candidate replies: "Life everlasting," that is, heaven. When praying, in the words of the Church, for a departing soul, the priest puts forward the faith of the dying Christian as a sure title to the divine mercy, saying that, however grievously the dying man may have sinned, he, nevertheless, did not deny the faith, but believed faithfully. The great apostle of the Gentiles gloried in having kept the faith amid numerous obstacles and combats, and he set forth this fact as an infallible title to the eternal crown of glory.

The dishonesty and immorality which are making a sad havoc among some Catholics have their source in religious indifference, in the want of a lively faith. Experience teaches that wherever the spirit of faith prevails, there also morality and virtue reign supreme.

What is faith? Faith, in general, is an assent to truths and facts which we of ourselves do not know,

but believe on the testimony of credible witnesses. The more learned and trustworthy the witnesses appear to us, the stronger is our faith in their testimony. When the witnesses are numerous and consistent with one another, and all the circumstances indicate that not only they could not have been deceived or mistaken, but that also they could have had no interest or intention to deceive, their testimony must, conformably to right reason, be admitted as perfectly true, reliable, and credible. To reject such a testimony argues either insincerity or a lack of common sense.

Natural Faith. Faith is a natural necessity for every man. It is indispensable in our daily life. How greatly to be pitied is he who boasts that he believes only what he himself sees or understands! Such a one pretends to be wiser than the rest of mankind; and, nevertheless, if he intends to live in the society of his fellowmen and acquire knowledge, he must credit their testimony; he cannot otherwise learn the names of things, the existence and location of other countries, history, any one of the sciences or acquire any trade or profession. Moreover, however great his learning, he cannot fully comprehend the simple facts that daily fall under his observation. Although he knows that plants grow, yet he cannot comprehend *how* they grow; the *how* is always, and will ever remain, a mystery to him. Although he may know how to produce light and sound, their intrinsic nature and

mode of action are an inexplicable mystery to him. Is not thought, its whole process, full of mysteries? And the phenomenon of sleep also? All our boasted science never penetrates beyond the surface of nature. We daily believe numberless things which we cannot comprehend, and we believe them most firmly. We hold as true numberless things which we have personally neither seen nor heard, because we naturally trust the testimony of credible witnesses. The more reliable they are, the stronger is our faith in their testimony. But, as it is human to err, we, in our natural faith, run the risk of being deceived by untruthful or insufficiently informed witnesses. From this we infer that mere human testimony, being liable to error, cannot of itself produce *infallible* certainty.

Supernatural Faith. In matters pertaining to religion our faith must, necessarily, be supernatural, or divine, as to its foundation. Supernatural faith is an assent to truths revealed by God, whether these truths are within the domain of reason or transcend reason. The testimony on which religious faith rests, is and must be divine, for God alone can teach us what He requires us to believe and to do in order to fulfil our destiny. "If we receive the testimony of men," says the beloved disciple, "the testimony of God is greater" (1 John, 5.9), must be accepted as soon as it is known. Religious faith, to be genuine, cannot be a human product, but necessarily originates from God giving His

testimony or revealing His will to man. It may be thus defined: "A virtue infused by God into our soul, by which we firmly believe and hold as true whatever He has revealed and the Church proposes to our belief, whether or no it be contained in the Bible."

Religious faith is supernatural in its source, for it is a gift of God; it is supernatural in its object, which regards God Himself; it is supernatural in its motive, which is the infallible testimony, or revelation, of God; it is supernatural in its evidence, which is the authority of the infallible Church commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach and define the truths He Himself revealed.

Supernatural faith necessarily imparts *infallible* certainty. The reason of this is, that there can be no deception in God either as to His knowledge or as to the manner or means of His communicating His revelation to mankind. Because God is truth itself, the object of faith, that is, what He reveals is necessarily true, and is one and unchangeable, like truth itself. Supernatural faith, therefore, must be one and unchangeable, and exclusive of error, which thrives only in changeable doctrines.

The certainty imparted by supernatural faith is so much superior to every natural certainty, as God's knowledge and veracity are infinitely superior to the knowledge and veracity of creatures. God knows all things; He is, therefore, not liable to err or to be mistaken; He knows infinitely more than all angels and

men combined. God is the eternal Truth; He, therefore, cannot possibly deceive. God, moreover, is almighty; He, therefore, cannot fail in the choice of a suitable and fully competent medium to impart His revelation to mankind. This medium is His Church, the Catholic Church, and no other. From all this it follows that supernatural faith, to be really such, necessarily excludes all manner of doubt and hesitation, and all mere opinions.

Opinion is assent to some proposition, without any real certainty as to its truth. Whenever the testimony of the witnesses is contradictory, or when the matter in question is not sufficiently clear, we either doubt altogether, or we form an opinion based on what we consider the more reliable testimony, or the more weighty reasons. If, however, we afterwards discover a more weighty reason for the other side, we change our opinion; and as long as we have not acquired positive certainty, we are liable to change our opinion.

But supernatural faith, in its defined object, excludes all doubt and hesitation, every kind of uncertainty and, consequently, all mere opinions, because, as we have seen, supernatural faith produces absolute certainty. Since there is no possibility of error or deception in supernatural faith, there cannot be any changeableness in it; neither faith nor the truths of faith are changeable. Therefore those who vary in their religious tenets, that is, who believe one day doctrines which

are at variance with those they previously believed, and later on again change their religious tenets, or who constantly vary their religious doctrines, or always seek to adapt them to the times, such persons do not possess supernatural or divine faith, but only changeable human opinions.

SUPERNATURAL FAITH

Faith is not the understanding of a thing, but a firm assent to its truth. Supernatural faith imparts supernatural knowledge and certainty to our mind. It is not founded on reason, but is far above it, for it is based on the revelation of God who is omniscient and infallible. Since we find inexplicable mysteries even in the nature that surrounds us, we need not wonder that the supernatural regions of faith abound in mysteries still more obscure and impenetrable. Though these mysteries, such as the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, may appear to be contrary to reason, they are not and cannot be really so, but they are inaccessible to our reason's very limited capacity. They are necessarily true, because they are revealed by God, who is the Infallible Truth and the Author of our reason. And since God cannot contradict Himself, the truths of revelation do not and cannot contradict the truths of reason, although they are infinitely above it. There-

fore, as soon as satisfactory evidence is produced that God has made a revelation to mankind, every one who is aware of this evidence is bound in conscience to accept and believe the revelation, and no one may reasonably or lawfully doubt its truth.

Protestants, *as such*, neither do nor can possess real supernatural faith concerning any doctrine whatever, for it is not in their power to produce satisfactory evidence that God has revealed it. Let us bear in mind that supernatural faith does not consist in the bold and persistent assertion that a certain doctrine is contained in the Bible, and that the Bible is God's holy and infallible word. Before we can be infallibly certain, as faith requires us to be, that the Bible is the word of God, we must first have infallible evidence or authority that we possess the genuine Bible, that the Bible contains the whole of God's word or revelation, and that we understand the Bible *in the very same sense in which God Himself understands it*. If we attach any other meaning to God's word, it is no longer God's infallible word, but only the fallible and changeable word of a fallible man, and is, therefore, no longer truth, but falsehood and error.

In matters of faith, that is, in matters concerning divine revelation, human authority, human views, human theories, human opinions and mere human reason, or private judgment, are utterly worthless, and cannot produce the certainty or truth of faith, but only ever-

changing opinions, doubt, and error. The sectarian mind is, accordingly, never at rest, but, as St. Paul says, it is constantly "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, ever learning and never attaining to the knowledge of truth" (Eph. 4, 11 and 2 Tim. 3,7). The sectarian, therefore, being destitute of infallible certainty in his religious convictions, cannot lay claim to real supernatural faith, but only to mere human and changeable opinions.

But the Catholic can make a genuine supernatural act of faith, because his faith rests on the infallible teaching and authority of the infallible Church of Jesus Christ, for to her alone our divine Saviour imparted the infallible authority to preach to mankind His divine revelation.

Jesus Christ promised to build His Church on Peter, when He said to him: "Thou art Peter (that is, a rock), and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be loosed in heaven" (Mat. 16, 18-19). When the proper time had come, Jesus Christ kept this grand and magnificent promise, for shortly before ascending into Heaven, He actually installed St. Peter as His successor in the government of His Church, for He, the Good Shepherd, entrusted His whole flock to Peter's

pastoral care with these memorable words: "Feed My lambs; feed My lambs; feed My sheep" (John 21, 15-17). From that moment St. Peter became the actual pastor of Christ's whole flock, and, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, actually exercised all the power of this supereminent office.

Our divine Saviour intended that all the powers He conferred on His Church for the salvation of mankind, should be used only under St. Peter's direction and authority, because, as Jesus Himself had prayed, St. Peter was never to stray away from the faith, but was destined constantly to confirm his brethren therein. "I have prayed for thee," Christ said to him, "that thy faith fail not; and thou, being converted, confirm thy brethren" (Luke 22, 32). The history of the Catholic Church has clearly proved the efficacy of Christ's prayer for St. Peter and his successors, for none of them has ever strayed from the faith, and all have confirmed their brethren in the faith.

Jesus, when He came upon earth, had received all power from His heavenly Father for the salvation of mankind. Before returning to heaven, He imparted the same divine power to His apostles, when He commissioned them to preach to all nations the very same doctrines He had taught them, and promised to His Church infallibility and indestructibility, and, at the same time, imposed on all men, under pain of eternal condemnation, the obligation to become her faithful

and docile members. Here are His very words, collected from the four Evangelists: "All power is given Me in heaven and on earth. As My Father hath sent Me, I also send you. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them; teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned. Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. I will send you the Holy Ghost; He will teach you all things, and will abide with you forever. He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me. He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."

Such was the mission, such were the powers of the apostles. To prove their divine mission and the truth of their preaching, they wrought miracles so evident, that even their most bitter enemies could neither doubt nor deny them. Therefore the Church holds on earth the place of Jesus Christ, and continues His work, the redemption of mankind; she is duly commissioned to teach in all ages the doctrines of Christ, and to frame and execute laws requisite for the fulfilment of her divine mission; moreover, being guided by the Holy

Ghost and protected by Christ Himself, she cannot err or be destroyed, and all men are bound, under pain of eternal damnation, to accept her teaching and to submit to her laws.

Supernatural faith, therefore, is to be found only in the Church of Christ, governed by St. Peter, because she alone is divinely commissioned to impart to all men, until the end of the world, the whole of divine revelation, and because she alone is infallible and indestructible. Submission to her infallible teaching produces the infallible certainty required by supernatural faith. In believing her doctrines we cannot possibly err, for the infallible God obliges us, under pain of eternal reprobation, to accept them.

THE CHURCH FOUNDED BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Our divine Saviour Jesus Christ entrusted the Church He founded with the mission of transmitting His revelation to all men, and of providing them with the means of saving their souls.

The revelation or teaching of our Saviour must be transmitted in its entirety and without change or alteration, to mankind in all ages and nations, for Jesus expressly commanded His apostles to do so: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, . . . teaching them to

observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned. He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Matt. 28 ; Mark 16 ; Matt. 18.)

The Church of Christ, which is the medium of this transmission, must, therefore, be endowed with the authority to teach His revelation to men, to explain and define it without the least danger of error or falsehood ; in other words, the medium of the divine revelation must be endowed by God with infallibility. A fallible medium would be no true medium of the divine revelation, for it would be liable to transmit error and lead men astray from God, and God could not require men to believe its teaching under pain of eternal damnation, saying: " He that believeth not, shall be condemned."

The Church, moreover, must necessarily be a visible teaching body, for Christ founded her to teach men on earth the truths He revealed. A church empowered to teach men must be a body, otherwise it could not teach men ; it must be visible, for an invisible church could teach only through private and individual inspiration, a method unadapted to mankind and to the method of God Himself, who sent His divine Son, clothed in our human nature, to teach men ; and unadapted also to the very method of Jesus Christ Himself who commissioned His apostles, a visible body of men, to preach the Gospel to all nations. Consequently, the Church

of Jesus Christ must necessarily be a visible teaching body, endowed with infallible authority to enable her to be a proper and fit medium to transmit His divine revelation to mankind.

But such a body necessarily requires a head to rule and govern it, and to decide doubts and disputes, from whose decisions there should be no appeal, for the infallible authority of the body must needs reside in the head. The denial of any of these points includes the denial of the possibility of transmitting the divine revelation pure and unadulterated throughout all ages to all nations.

God is a God of order, for He is infinite wisdom. But there can be no order, but only trouble, disorder, and confusion in a society that lacks a head. Every human society, however small, requires a head. Where there is no head, or where the head is not obeyed, there can be no order, and anarchy reigns. Where anarchy reigns, disorganization necessarily ensues. A society without a head is, like a corpse, lifeless. If even the smallest human society needs a head to keep it in order and secure its existence, how much more necessary is a competent head in God's grandest and noblest institution on earth, that is, His Church, which He has destined to include all mankind, and which He has endowed with such wonderful powers and entrusted with the transmission of His revelation and the means of salvation for all mankind! Even every Protestant sect,

however insignificant in numbers and territory, has a head of some kind, and owes its continuance to the subordination of its members to that head; and that head *practically* wields a power of government, from which there is no appeal, and thus it practically claims infallibility. The waiving of this claim would be practically a suicidal policy for that sect. Whenever this practical claim of a sect is resisted, a split occurs, and a new sect makes its appearance in the world, and this new sect will also have some kind of head practically proclaiming its own infallibility.

The Church of Christ has been endowed by Him with a competent head in order to ensure her existence and the proper fulfilment of her divine mission; and her head has been endowed by Him with infallibility, for her infallibility can reside nowhere but in the head that governs her. This stands to reason, and is fully confirmed by facts. Before leaving this earth to ascend to Heaven, Jesus Christ, as St. John relates in the twenty-first chapter of his Gospel, appointed St. Peter as the head of His Church. We have but to read the History of the Church from the very beginning, and we shall find on almost every page that St. Peter and his lawful successors have in all ages exercised over the whole Church the powers of Head of the Church, of Vicar of Jesus Christ, her invisible Head.

For the sake of brevity, it will suffice to prove this by the following quotation from the works of the great St.

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who suffered martyrdom in the middle of the third century.

“The devil,” he says in his great work on *The Unity of the Church*, “has discovered a new means of seduction in the very bosom of Christianity. By means of heresy and schism he corrupts the truth of Jesus Christ, breaks the bonds of unity, wrests from the Church her conquests and pours out his darkness into the midst of the radiant splendor of the Redemption, so that men who believe and call themselves Christians, are merely the minions of Anti-Christ. This lamentable error arises from their neglect to trace the origin of truth and connect themselves with the head of the ecclesiastical power, and thus they abandon the heavenly doctrine. He who reflects carefully needs no long investigations to find out the true faith, for our faith rests on an easy and simple demonstration. The Lord said to Cephas (Peter): ‘Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.’ (Matt. 16, 18-19.) Another time, it was after His resurrection, the Lord said to Peter: ‘Feed My sheep.’ (John 21, 17.) The Lord, therefore, wished to build His Church on Peter, who is that rock. Hence to Peter alone He entrusted the care of feeding

all His sheep. It is true that, after His resurrection, He said to all the apostles assembled together: 'As My Father hath sent Me, so do I send you; receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained (John 20, 21-23). But He, nevertheless, based the unity of the Church only on one See, viz.: that of Peter, for, by his divine authority, He placed the *origin and source of unity on the head of one individual only*. The other apostles were, without doubt, what Peter was; they shared his honor and power; and yet the *foundation of unity* was established *in the primacy of Peter*. Thus the Church of Christ is one, for it presents only one See, one center of unity. Although every bishop is a pastor, there is, however, but one flock in the Church under the unanimous direction of the successors of the apostles. There is but one episcopate, of which each bishop presides over a part. There is likewise but one Church, although, through her glorious fecundity, she extends to an immense multitude of members. The sun emits many rays, yet there is but one light; a tree is divided into many branches, but there is only one common trunk, one common root; a spring distributes its waters far off, but however abundant they may be, their origin remains unchanged. If you separate the bright ray from its focus, it is extinguished; if you detach a branch from its tree, it dies; if you isolate a rivulet

from its source, it dries up. The same finds its application in the Lord's Church. The rays of her brightness enlighten the universe, and though this light is so diffuse, it is one. As a mysterious tree, the Church spreads her branches over the whole world; as an immense stream, she waters all the countries of the earth with her vivifying waters. But the tree has only one trunk, and the stream only one source; everywhere is found the same principle, the same origin, the same mother rich in the treasures of her fruitfulness. Her womb has borne us, her milk has fed us, her spirit animates us. Separation from the Church is union with an adulteress, depriving us of all share in the promises made to the Church; for he who forsakes the Church Christ has founded, shall never obtain the rewards He has promised. Such a one is a stranger, a profane man, an enemy. He ceases to have God as his Father, who ceases to have the Church as his Mother."

The Catholic Church to-day is the identical Church founded by Jesus Christ and His apostles. She is now the very same body she was then, and therefore is now, as truly as then, the competent and infallible witness of the revelation made by our Lord Jesus Christ. "The Catholic Church," says Dr. Brownson in his *Review* for April, 1848, "is not an aggregation of individuals who at any given time compose it, a body born and dying with them, but the contemporary of our Lord

and His apostles, in immediate communion with them, and thus annihilating all distance of time and place between them and us. She is a corporate body, a collective individual possessing the attributes of immortality. She knows no interruption, no succession of moments, no lapse of years. Like the eternal God, who is ever with her, and whose organ she is, she has duration, but no succession. She can never grow old, can never fall into the past. The individuals who compose the body may change, but she changes not; one by one they may pass off, and one by one be renewed, while she continues ever the same; as in our bodies, old particles constantly escape and new ones are assimilated, so that the whole matter of which they are composed is changed every six or seven years, and yet they remain identically the same bodies. These changes as to individuals change nothing as to the body. The Church to-day is identically that very body which saw our Lord when He tabernacled in the flesh. She who is our dear Mother, and on whose words we hang with so much delight, beheld with her own eyes the stupendous miracles which were performed in Judea eighteen [nineteen] hundred years ago; she assisted at the preaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended upon them in cloven tongues of fire; she heard St. Peter, the Prince of the apostles, relate how the Spirit descended upon Cornelius and his household, and declare how God had

chosen that by his mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of God and believe; she listened with charmed ear and ravished heart to the last admonition of the disciple whom Jesus loved: 'My dear children, love one another'; she saw the old Temple razed to the ground, the legal rites of the Old Covenant abolished, and the once chosen people driven out from the Holy Land, and scattered over all the earth; she beheld pagan Rome in the pride of pomp and power; she bled under Rome's persecuting emperors, and finally planted the cross in triumph on her ruins. She has been the contemporary of eighteen [nineteen] hundred years, which she has arrested in their flight and made present to all generations as they rise. With one hand she receives the *depositum* of faith from the Lord and His commissioned apostles, with the other she imparts it to us."

In transmitting God's revelation to us and deciding questions and doubts concerning it, "she has merely," continues Dr. Brownson, "to declare a simple fact which she has received on competent authority, that is, merely to declare what our Lord or His apostles have told her. What needs she in order to do it with infallible certainty? Simply protection against forgetting, misunderstanding, and mis-stating; and this protection she has, because she has our Lord always abiding with her (Matt. 28, 20), and the Paraclete who leads her into all truth and 'brings to her remembrance' (John 14, 26) all the words spoken to her by our Lord Him-

self personally, or by His inspired apostles, keeping her memory always fresh, rendering her infallible assistance rightly to understand and accurately to express what she remembers to have been taught."

In doctrinal and moral decisions it is not so much the Pope or the Councils of the Church that speak, as the infallible Holy Ghost speaking through them as His mouth-piece. Therefore, all mankind is obliged to accept and submit to the teaching and decisions of the Church in all that pertains to divine revelation; and those who resist the Church of Christ in these matters, resist God Himself, as our divine Saviour declares, and can have no share in His heavenly kingdom. Nothing can be more logical or clear; hence St. Cyprian says expressly: "Out of the Church there is no salvation." The learned Origen tells us: "Let us not suffer ourselves to be deceived, for no one can be saved outside of this house, that is, outside of the Church of Christ. Whoever leaves it, becomes guilty of his own reprobation." "He who wishes to live by the Spirit of Christ," says St. Augustine, "must be a member of His body, that is, of His Church." In no other church can salvation be found, since Christ has founded and could found but one Church, for, says St. Thomas, "divine truth is only one;" as between two points only one straight line can be drawn, but numberless crooked ones, so also truth is one, whilst error, being a deviation from the truth, is manifold. More-

over, no one but Christ has the right to found a church, or the road to heaven, and Christ has founded only one, as St. Paul declares: "For another foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." (I Cor. 3, 11.) Therefore, he who rejects the Church and her teaching, rejects God's revelation, and is thus in open rebellion against His Sovereign Lord and Master, and is necessarily excluded from His kingdom.

PAPAL INFALLIBILITY—NO SALVATION OUT OF THE CHURCH

The dogma of the Papal Infallibility is a stumbling-block to non-Catholics. This is owing principally to a misconception of its meaning. Papal infallibility neither means nor includes impeccability, for *all men*, including the Pope, are sinners (I John 1, 8). The Pope goes regularly and frequently to confession, and his confessor is a special official of his household. Neither does Papal infallibility mean individual infallibility, for the Pope, as a mere individual, is liable to make mistakes. But infallibility is the Pope's *official prerogative*, and pertains to him whenever he acts in his official capacity as head of the Church. Let us illustrate this by two comparisons. Mr. N. is president of a thrifty bank, or corporation. His signa-

ture as president thereof imparts an immense value to a note, check or document; but were he to affix his signature thereto as a mere private individual, the same might be worthless. Also a member of the bar may, in private, emit erroneous views which have no binding power; but, if he be an able and conscientious judge, he will be very careful, in his judicial capacity, to give correct decisions possessing genuine legal force. In like manner, the Pope, when acting in his private or individual capacity, is not endowed with infallibility; he is infallible only when he acts in his official capacity as Vicar of Christ and successor of St. Peter.

But in what matters is the Pope infallible? The infallibility of the Church resides in the Pope, who is her Head, her mouth-piece. But Jesus Christ conferred infallibility on His Church for the spiritual benefit of mankind, that she might securely lead all men on the right road to heaven. Therefore, the infallibility of the Church and of her head is not universal, but extends only to matters intimately connected with the salvation of men. It means that the Church, the Pope, cannot err in defining the doctrine of Christ, in teaching men what they must believe and do to be saved. Although this infallibility is directly confined to matters of faith and morals, it often indirectly embraces other matters pertaining to philosophy, natural sciences, politics, etc., whenever these reach into the domain of faith and morals; for instance, when such

matters are opposed to divine revelation or to the divine commandments, and either deny revealed truths, such as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, or teach or prescribe things forbidden by the law of God. When this occurs, *the Church alone*, being the representative of God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe, is competent to decide the matter.

Many object to Papal infallibility that "God alone is infallible." To this we reply that God alone is infallible *in all things*. This, however, does not prevent man from possessing a limited kind of infallibility. We are, for instance, infallibly certain of some truths, such as, that there is a God, that two and two are four, that a circle is round, that every effect must have a cause. Moreover, we can retort the argument against those who deny the Papal infallibility. Are you, we ask them, really certain, unmistakably certain, infallibly certain that the Pope is not and cannot be infallible? If you are not infallibly certain of the Pope's *fallibility*, you may be mistaken in your opinion and you cannot, therefore, conclude for certain that he is not infallible. If, however, you maintain that you are infallibly certain that the Pope is not infallible, you attribute infallibility to yourself, although you maintain that God alone is infallible! Your pretension is absurd.

The Church has always accepted and obeyed the Papal decisions as infallible and unappealable, approv-

ing whatever the Pope approved, rejecting and condemning whatever he rejected and condemned, and looking upon as heretics or schismatics all who refused submission to his authority and decisions in matters of faith and morals. As an unanswerable argument against the heretics of their time, the early Fathers of the Church were wont to adduce the fact that said heretics were not in communion with the Pope, or that they had been condemned by him.

We know it is human to err. Every man has erred at times, has more or less frequently changed his views, rejecting and condemning later what he had at first accepted and held as true. It is human to err. Every body or assembly of men represents a diversity of convictions and contradictory opinions. Even the most learned scientists materially disagree in scientific matters. This need not astonish us, for it is human to err, to disagree. But as genuine history testifies, among the Popes there has never existed any disagreement or contradiction in matters pertaining either to faith or morals. Over two hundred and sixty Popes have succeeded one another in the Chair of St. Peter. On numberless occasions they have been consulted concerning intricate doctrinal and moral questions. These they have elucidated and decided, making numberless decrees, and yet they have never disagreed or contradicted one another! And, nevertheless, it is human to err! And yet these many Popes have actually *never erred*;

they have been wonderfully unanimous and consistent with one another in all their official decisions! How do you explain this grand fact, which has no parallel in history?

The only natural and logical explanation of this truly singular and stupendous fact is, that this Papal unanimity and consistency is the unanimity and consistency of truth itself, which, like God, its Author, is *one* and *unchangeable*. The Popes have been unanimous and consistent only because they *always* had truth on their side. But, since it is human to err, the Popes could not always have sided with truth, had they not been constantly enlightened, guided and directed by the "Spirit of truth," whom Jesus Christ promised to His Church: "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send you in My name, will teach you all things, and will abide with you forever" (John 14-26, 16). We need not wonder, then, that, guided by the Spirit of truth, the Popes have never deviated from truth and have always been actually and practically infallible.

In submitting to the decisions of the Pope, we submit to the Church, nay, to Jesus Christ Himself, and, therefore, we cannot go astray. The very fact that a doctrine is taught or has been defined by the Pope, by the Church, suffices to impart to us an infallible certainty of its truth. Were there in this any error or danger of error, we could, with the great St. Augustine, justly lay the blame on God Himself, and say: "If

we are deceived, it is Thou, O Lord, who hast deceived us."

The Protestant sects in making or changing their creeds, in approving or condemning doctrines, have recourse to balloting or voting, and the majority, sometimes amounting to only one, decides, for instance, that infant baptism is not necessary, that hell is not eternal, or that there is no hell at all, or that Rev. Mr. N. is a heretic. This greatly amuses free-thinkers and other infidels, who clearly perceive that all these matters are only private opinions, and that, in spite of the doctrine of *private judgment*, the fallible opinion of even the smallest majority becomes a real tyranny over the minority. The very men who deny infallibility to the Church founded by Jesus Christ, assume it for themselves, and impose their views on their fellowmen. How inconsistent!

But how different it is in the Catholic Church. She is infallible, and her infallibility is vested in her head, the Pope, without whom there can be no binding decree in matters of faith or morals. If he approves a Council, its decrees are legitimate; if he disapproves it, its decrees are powerless. To render a decree the Holy Scriptures, the previous decrees of Popes and Councils, the writings of the Fathers and theologians, the whole of tradition, in a word, are consulted and thoroughly examined, and most fervent prayers are addressed to the Holy Ghost to obtain light and counsel. And, as

history testifies, the light and assistance of the Spirit of truth has never failed the Church and her head, for her doctrines have ever been the same, unchanging, consistent and identical at all times, in all places, under all circumstances. They are true, because they have always possessed the properties of truth, being one, consistent, unchanging and excluding all error. Therefore, he who rejects the doctrines of the infallible Catholic Church and her Lord, rejects divine revelation and rebels against his Sovereign Lord and Master and shall be excluded from His Kingdom!

To this conclusion non-Catholics object as being an uncharitable doctrine. But this doctrine of exclusive salvation is not uncharitable, for it is the doctrine of the God of charity, who became man and died a most painful and ignominious death to save all men. It is the Infallible Truth, the Son of God, who expressly said: "Go, teach all nations. . . . He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be condemned." How dare one, calling himself a Christian, charge with uncharitableness Him who gave His blood and His life to save him!

We should make a distinction between a person in error and erroneous doctrines. The Church, being commissioned to teach the truths revealed by Jesus Christ, must condemn error directly and necessarily. She also condemns by excommunication those of her children who, having fallen into an error previously

condemned, openly and obstinately persist therein. And do not all the Protestant sects exclude from membership those who teach doctrines at variance with their essential tenets?

But let us bear well in mind that the Catholic Church does *not* condemn individuals to hell. She, indeed, canonizes saints, that is, she declares certain persons to be in heaven and worthy of being honored as the friends of God, because it has been most clearly proved, after a long and thorough examination that they had, during their lives, practised the Christian virtues in a *heroic* degree and thus been perfect imitators of the Saviour. But the Catholic Church does not and cannot claim to locate individuals in "the region of disorder and everlasting horror" (Job 10, 22). Her mission is to lay down and teach the principles of salvation revealed by the Saviour, to point out the road to heaven, to help men on their way thither, to condemn errors leading to eternal perdition, and when necessary, to expel from her bosom obstinate apostates. What is to be done in the next world with individuals who have died in error, lies not within the scope of her mission to decide, because God, who alone can read their hearts, has reserved to Himself the right to judge men after death and to "render to every man according to his works" (Mat. 16, 27).

If a man, *through his own fault*, dies in error, God

will most justly condemn him as a rebel who wilfully rejected His revelation. Such a one deserves that terrible fate, for he can have no claim to share in heaven the glory of Him, against whose authority he persistently rebelled.

But if a man, *without any fault of his own*, dies in error, God will not consign him to hell on account of his error, because it was not wilful on his part. If this same man has never wilfully transgressed the divine law in some important matter, or, if he has done so, but has sincerely repented of it, God will not fail to judge him worthy of eternal bliss. The reason is that such a man, *sincerely* believing himself to be in the right, and entertaining no doubt concerning the truth of his religious convictions, is really not a rebel to divine authority, but a true Catholic at heart. Were such a one to discover his error, he would, without doubt, at once renounce it and embrace the true faith at any and every earthly sacrifice; or, were he to conceive a serious doubt concerning the truth of his religious convictions, he would give himself no rest and leave no means untried to satisfactorily solve his doubt.

Catholics neither claim the right, nor undertake to judge of the sincerity or of the interior dispositions of non-Catholics, but leave them to God, the omniscient and most just Judge of the living and dead, who has established His Church and commissioned her to teach

all nations, and imposes on all men, under pain of forfeiting their salvation, the obligation to believe her teaching and become her faithful members.

GLORIES OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

Amid the numberless ever clashing, ever changing opinions by which the human mind outside of the Catholic Church is harassed, the mind of the Catholic enjoys the sweet calm and repose of peace, because his faith, by freeing him from all doubt and hesitation, imparts to him absolute certainty concerning the great problems of human origin and destiny. His mind rests completely in the possession of truth. With infallible certainty he believes all the doctrines revealed by the infallible God through His infallible Church. He walks securely on a smooth and even road in the bright noon-day-light of faith, whilst non-Catholics are blindly groping their way on the rugged road of mere human opinions and theories, alongside of the fearful precipices of error, in the utter darkness of hesitation and doubt, seeking isolated and broken fragments of truth.

The humblest Catholic, who knows his Catechism well, possesses knowledge far superior to that of the most profound philosophers of antiquity and of the most erudite non-Catholic scientists of modern times.

The Catholic faith, in its sublimity, surpasses the comprehension of the sharpest and deepest intellects and, nevertheless, is so clear and simple as to be within reach of even untutored minds. The Catholic child that has learned the Catechism, is possessed of far greater wisdom than the greatest non-Catholic scientist, for he is acquainted with the grandest supernatural truths and mysteries and with the means of salvation. This sublime knowledge remains hidden from the non-Catholic, whose learning, however vast its proportions, scarcely skims over nature's surface.

God is so great, so infinitely superior to His creatures, that, as the Church admirably expresses it, "to serve God is to reign." No earthly dignity is comparable to the dignity of "servant of God." God is so great, that we should wonder, not that He commands man to serve Him, but that He should suffer man, who is so incomparably beneath Him, to serve Him, and should graciously accept his homage and service, of which He has no need. This thought it was that induced St. Paul to exclaim: "God is not ashamed to be called our God" (Hebr. II, 16). To be permitted to honor and serve God in the humblest condition should be reckoned a greater honor than to command armies and rule nations! Moreover, our Catholic faith raises us to the sublime dignity, not of servants, but of *Children of God!* "The Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called and should

be the children of God" (1 John 3, 1). Our faith has, therefore, made us God's children, the cherished objects of His paternal love and affection, His heirs destined to reign forever with Him in heaven and share in His own happiness. What can be more honorable, more noble, more glorious!

The true faith also confers on us a truly royal dignity, for it enables us to rule over our passions, a task far more difficult than to govern a country. Faith, according to St. Augustine, turns sinners into just men, causes the just to grow in holiness, and imparts supernatural strength to the weak, that they may overcome every temptation and error, and "suffer for justice's sake" the most bitter persecutions and torments, and even death itself.

Far from being hostile to learning and science, the Catholic Church has alone preserved them from destruction. When the hordes of barbarians laid waste the Roman empire with its civilization, destroying every vestige of learning and art, the Church alone, amid the general desolation, remained standing and saved science and art from utter annihilation.

When pagan and barbarian monarchs trampled on the rights of their subjects, the Church taught those despots that they were only human and amenable to God's justice for their tyranny, and, when necessary, effectively used her thunderbolts to protect the oppressed.

The Catholic Church has fulfilled Christ's prophecy: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8, 32). The Catholic Church has set the human mind free by dispelling from it the appalling darkness of pagan error, ignorance and superstition, and enlightening it with the brilliant light of divine revelation. The widespread and disgraceful slavery prevalent among the ancient pagans became gradually extinct under the benign influence of Christian charity and the wise regulations of Church discipline.

Before their conversion the barbarian nations were ignorant and lawless, indulging in violence and rapine. By making them Christians, the Catholic Church changed them into the most civilized and enlightened nations on earth. If we have now the good fortune of not being half-clad, ignorant and terror-inspiring barbarians, we owe it to the Catholic faith which the Church taught our ancestors.

The Catholic Church, through the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity, has made mankind as of one family, brethren of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and as brothers among themselves, without distinction of nationality; and she established among diverse nations a certain bond of union and sympathy. During the Middle Ages, that is, before the appearance of Protestantism, the Christian nations formed but one family under the paternal direction of the Pope, who was

usually accepted as the arbiter of disputes between nations, and between monarchs and their subjects.

Before the foundation of the Catholic Church, charity was utterly unknown on earth. Infanticide, divorce and abominable crimes prevailed everywhere. Woman was treated as a degraded being, fit only to be the sport of men's passions. The slaves far outnumbered the freemen, and their lot was worse than that of cattle. Work was looked upon as mean and disgraceful and was performed only by slaves. Men cruelly fought and butchered each other, or combated wild beasts for the amusement of both rulers and people. The wars were wholesale butcheries, and furnished the occasion for the commission of every outrage and crime. And as there was no sympathy for the poor, the suffering, the unfortunate, hospitals, asylums and other charitable institutions were not even known by name. But in fulfilment of David's prophecy (Ps. 103, 30), the Catholic faith brought into the world a new spirit, the spirit of Christian charity, which has "renewed the face of the earth." Under the loving and tender care of the Church, there sprang up, in the very beginning of her existence, hospitals, asylums and other charitable institutions. The poor and the unfortunate were tenderly cared for and looked upon as her treasures. The very pagans, the very persecutors of the Church became, in times of the plague and other public calamities, ob-

jects of her loving sympathy and indiscriminating charity.

The Catholic faith has inspired, and still inspires, the noblest heroism ever witnessed on earth. Millions of courageous Christians underwent unflinchingly most excruciating torments and death for the faith. The young, the weak, the timid not only bore heroically every torture that human ingenuity and cruelty could devise, but endured them all with admirable fortitude and even with joy, accounting themselves honored and happy in being found worthy of suffering and dying for the love of Him who had mercifully deigned to lay down His life to redeem them.

In all ages the Catholic missionaries have displayed wonderful zeal and heroism in leaving family, friends, country, the comforts of life, in order to go to preach the Gospel to the heathen amid constant privations and persecutions. Their heroism is inspired by the Catholic faith. It is also under the inspiration of the same faith that thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands of young men, young women have, in all ages, renounced the world, its goods and pleasures together with their own free-will, in order to consecrate themselves to God by a life of austerity, to devote their whole life, without hope or desire of earthly reward, to instructing the ignorant, nursing the sick, even lepers, and relieving every kind of misery. The Catholic Church

has a special religious order or congregation to relieve almost every kind of human affliction. This fact, apart from every other argument, is sufficient to prove the divine origin of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church is the grandest institution in the world. No other has so many members. In her alone are found men of heroic *supernatural* virtue. The most holy and virtuous persons that have lived since the beginning of the Christian Era, have all been her faithful children. Out of her there can be no *supernatural* virtue or holiness. The greatest geniuses, the brightest intellects that have adorned mankind, have all been members of the Catholic Church. All that is grand, soul-inspiring and sublime in architecture, painting, sculpture, music and literature, has been inspired by the Catholic faith, and serves to adorn her worship.

“The Catholic Church,” says Gladstone, “has marched for fifteen hundred years at the head of human civilization, and has harnessed to its chariot, as the horses of a triumphal car, the chief intellectual and material forces of the world; its art, the art of the world; its genius, the genius of the world; its greatness, glory, grandeur and majesty have been almost, though not absolutely, all that in these respects the world has had to boast of.”

The Catholic Church, more than any human work or institution, more than any empire, has had to strug-

gle with bitter, constant, violent, powerful and protracted opposition. Man has, without avail, used every means in his power to encompass her ruin; and the Church, though devoid of human assistance, has signally triumphed over all her opponents and persecutors, and on them rebounded the ruin they had planned for her. Her persecutors have passed away; empires, kingdoms and numberless other human institutions, though only of yesterday, and upheld by all available human power, have already crumbled to pieces, or are tottering in their decay; whilst the Catholic Church, more ancient than all of them, still survives in the freshness and vigor of youth, more powerful, more dreaded than ever by her foes, and, at the same time, more honored, more flourishing than ever before! How numerous are the non-Catholics, some reluctantly, some sincerely, who now acknowledge the Catholic Church to be the most potent factor for good, and the only effective bulwark of society against vice and anarchy!

What a glory it is to be a member of that Church which, by imparting the true faith, procures the salvation of the individual; which, by her sacraments and wise laws, proves the safeguard of the family, the very basis of society!

Let us thank God, from our inmost heart, for having called us to the true faith. He could not have bestowed a greater blessing on us. What would life and

all His other gifts avail us without the gift of the true and only saving faith? Let us prize our faith above everything else. Let us with our whole heart love and cherish our divine faith. Let us faithfully cling to it as long as a breath of life remains in us, were it even at the cost of all our goods, our health, our honor, our liberty, our very life; for our faith is, indeed, and should ever be our greatest treasure. "The Catholic faith," says St. Augustine, "is preferable to all earthly riches, pleasures and grandeurs; it is preferable to the whole universe."

QUALITIES OF FAITH

St. Paul says that we are "justified by faith" (Rom. 5, 1), and that "the just man liveth by faith" (Rom. 1, 17). This is perfectly true of a living and practical faith. Our faith should be something more than a lifeless and sterile adhesion of our mind to the truths of divine revelation defined by the Church. Our faith, to be acceptable to God, should possess certain indispensable qualities.

I. The first of these necessary qualities is firmness. Our faith should be endowed with both interior and exterior firmness. The doctrines of faith, having been revealed by the infallible God through His infallible Church, are most certainly true. There is not the

slightest possibility of mistake or deception in accepting them. Their certainty immeasurably surpasses every other kind of certainty. Therefore, there cannot be any room for the least wavering or hesitation in adhering to them. On the contrary, the deeper, the more obscure, the more incomprehensible the truths of faith are to us, the more certain we should be that they are revealed by God who knows all things, and the more firmly we should believe them. Were all the truths of faith within the reach of our limited understanding, there would be no necessity of their being divinely revealed. It is quite natural that God in revealing some truths to mankind, should teach and make known things far above the grasp of man's natural faculties, which are, indeed, very limited. The least wilful doubt or hesitation in believing the truths we know to pertain to divine revelation, is a practical denial of God's truthfulness and a very sinful rebellion against His supreme authority.

Moreover, our words and our actions must all correspond to a firm interior faith, so that we may openly and unmistakably profess that we firmly believe all the truths of faith. "With the heart we believe unto justice," says St. Paul, "but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10, 10). Any wilful word or act of ours that would lead others to imagine that we have no faith, or that we are doubting or wavering in our faith, would be scandalous, for it

would be, as it were, a public denial of our faith, an insult to God's truthfulness and a rebellion against His authority. Whenever the glory of God, or the spiritual welfare of ourselves or of our neighbor requires it, we are bound to make open profession of a firm faith, and to defend it without wavering or hesitation, as St. Peter did with his wonted energy and sincerity: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John 6, 69, 70).

2. Our faith should also be universal; that is, we must believe *all* that the Holy Catholic Church teaches, without a single exception. The Catholic Church is infallible and cannot teach error. If we disbelieve or reject a single one of her decisions in matters of faith, we commit a grievous sin, for we thereby impugn her infallibility, and practically charge God Himself with deception, and rebel against His authority. Let us bear in mind that faith is not and cannot be a matter of choice. God, being infinitely just, can no more give us the liberty to believe what we choose, than He can permit us to act as we choose. Those who believe only what they choose, have no faith whatever, but only fallible human opinions; they cannot thereby please God, but, according to our divine Saviour's saying, they are already judged (John 3, 18), and will most assuredly be condemned, unless they hear the Church (Mat. 18, 17), and accept all that she teaches.

3. Our faith should, like truth, be genuine and unadulterated. Truth is intolerant and exclusive of error; the least adulteration of truth changes truth into error. For instance, ten times ten are one hundred. This truth admits of no adulteration; if you adulterate it, however slightly, you fall into error. If you would say, ten times ten are ninety-nine and seven-eighths, or one hundred and one-eighth, that would be wrong, would be an error. So long as you do not say always and exactly, "ten times ten are one hundred," you are wrong. A genuine faith is, therefore, both intolerant and exclusive of error, of false principles, of false doctrines; it excludes all change whatever; the slightest change or adulteration in it would make it erroneous and untrue, and it would thus cease to be God's genuine revelation. Just as there cannot be two Gods, so also there cannot be two contradictory revelations, two contradictory divine faiths, for St. Paul says expressly: "One God, one faith" (Eph. 4, 5). The Catholic Church has been proved by the most conclusive arguments to be the true Church of Jesus Christ; hence, all the other so-called churches are necessarily false. Since the Catholic faith is the true faith, every other belief or creed, whatever be its name, is necessarily false and leads, not to eternal bliss, but to everlasting reprobation (Mark 16, 16). We cannot be true and genuine Catholics without being intolerant and exclusive in matters of faith; we are bound to believe whatever the

Catholic Church believes and teaches, and to reject and condemn whatever she rejects and condemns. Our very salvation depends upon it.

4. Our faith must also be endowed with constancy and fortitude. It behooves us always and everywhere, under all circumstances, in prosperity and in adversity, in abundance and in want, amid joy and amid persecution, in life and in death, to cling steadfastly to our faith and to practise it courageously. We should, like St. Paul, prefer our faith to everything in this world: "I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord" (Phil. 3, 8). The Catholic faith is constant and unchangeable; why should we be inconstant and changing? Rather than ever waver in or renounce our faith, we should, after the example of millions of martyrs and confessors, be ready, for the sake of our faith, to sacrifice our goods, our liberty, our honor, our very life. We deservedly admire the noble constancy of the martyrs in enduring confiscation, imprisonment, slavery, the rack, boiling oil, the sword, the cross, wild beasts, the gridiron and every conceivable torment. But in enduring all these cruelties, in sacrificing all things to preserve their faith, they merely performed their duty. If we are true Catholics, we must be ready to imitate their constancy and fortitude and to undergo similar sufferings rather than renounce our faith, for our faith should be dearer

to us than all the natural goods we possess, than our very life.

5. Lastly, our faith must be practical. It is very doubtful whether we shall ever be called upon to die for our faith; but there is no doubt that we are all obliged "to live our faith." Faith, to be profitable, must be a living faith, that is, it must, by its actions, give evident signs of life. A dead faith, a faith that gives no sign of life, can be of no benefit for salvation, for says St. James (2, 17-26): "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead in itself. . . . For even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." "The just man," says St. Paul, "liveth by faith" (Rom. 1, 17). The just man is such only by the performance of good and holy works. But it is through supernatural faith that a man's works become holy and endowed with justice. The just man, then, lives by faith, that is, he is and remains a just man through his faith, which is the principle and inspiring agent of his good and holy works. Therefore, faith to be profitable to salvation must be practical, accompanied by good works. These works are no other than those prescribed by the commandments of God and of His Church. Faith teaches that God is our Creator and sovereign Lord, whom we are bound to obey in all things which He has commanded us. It teaches also that the Catholic Church has been founded by Jesus

Christ and invested by Him with the powers and means necessary to lead men to heaven, and that we are obliged, under the pain of forfeiting our salvation, to submit to her laws. "Let him that will not hear the Church be to thee as the heathen and publican." "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." Therefore, he who despises the authority of the Church, despises the authority of Jesus Christ Himself.

Hence, that man has a lively practical faith who faithfully keeps the commandments of God and of His Church. To keep them, we must avoid what they forbid and perform what they prescribe. Let us, first, examine what is forbidden by a practical faith.

All wilful hesitation or doubt is inconsistent with true faith. True faith, moreover, forbids us to do or say anything tending to approve or countenance heresy or unbelief. Some weak-minded Catholics, through ignorance or human respect, not only tolerate, but even advocate certain false maxims contrary to faith, such as these: "It matters not what a man believes; provided he is honest and does no injury to his neighbor, he cannot be lost. We all serve one and the same God; it matters not in which religion; we shall all be saved in the end." These and all similar maxims are utterly false and opposed to the true faith. The weak-kneed Catholics who advocate them, do not, it is true, intend thereby to renounce their faith, but wish only to avoid

displeasing their non-Catholic friends. They wish to avoid bitter disputes and giving pain to their friends, and, consequently, coincide with their erroneous views. But do these Catholics always act thus in business matters, in politics? When their temporal interests are at stake, are they so yielding, so condescending, or rather do they not then stick obstinately to their own views and courageously maintain their rights? But when their faith is assailed, when the interests of God and of their Mother, the Holy Catholic Church, are at stake, they act the part of a craven, and, to avoid giving displeasure to their *friends*, they betray their faith, that sacred and priceless treasure! Why do you try so hard, we may ask them, to please mortal men at the peril of your own soul and at the risk of grievously displeasing and offending the Almighty? What have these men done for you? Have they ever shed their blood and sacrificed their life for you? And, if you thus deservedly fall a victim to the divine justice, what can those men do to rescue you? What a shame, what a disgrace for you, who claim to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, to prefer such men to Jesus Christ, your Saviour, your greatest Benefactor! Remember this saying of the Son of God: "He that shall deny Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 10; 33).

A Catholic is also untrue to his faith whenever, without a just motive sanctioned by the Church, he reads

infidel books or papers, or the Protestant Bible, which is not the genuine Word of God on account of its suppressions and alterations. He who would seek to justify himself for doing so under the pretext that this sort of reading is harmless to him, shows clearly that his faith is already weak and wavering. He who has really a strong and lively faith, does not tolerate such matter in his house, nor defile with it his hands, his eyes or his mind. Reading being food for the mind, heretical and infidel reading cannot fail to instil into the reader's mind the deadly poison of false doctrines and erroneous principles. Those who read such productions evidently prove, that in matters of faith, they are guided, not by the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church, but by the accursed spirit of "so-called tolerance!" Whatever may be said to the contrary, the reading of erroneous doctrines, especially if frequent or habitual, always proves highly injurious even in superficial reading, because some of the poison will always "stick."

The Catholic faith forbids the approval, even if only tacit, of any heretical worship or anti-religious association. It is, therefore, sinful to assist at heretical preaching or divine service, or to go to hear infidel lectures. Catholics may not, without serious reasons, approved by their confessor or pastor, assist at baptisms, marriages or funerals, at which heretical ministers officiate. It is not only sinful, but even highly scandalous to take an active part in any heretical, Jewish or

other false worship, by playing the organ or singing at the services. The same applies to contributions, entertainments for the erection or support of heretical churches, synagogues, or masonic temples, or non-Catholic missions, and the like. Although Catholics, in bestowing alms, should not discriminate with regard to the religious belief of the necessitous, they should, nevertheless, guard against upholding heresy and error by their generosity. We should never lose sight of the fact that faith, like truth, is necessarily intolerant and exclusive of error, and that, therefore, a true Catholic will never compromise in matters of faith, for such a compromise is equivalent to a denial of the faith.

THE PRACTICE OF FAITH

It is not enough for us to be Catholics, to believe what the Catholic Church teaches, to have the true faith, in order to be saved; we must also "live by faith," as St. Paul tells us; that is, we must regulate our whole conduct by the teaching of faith, and never let our conduct be in opposition to, or contradict our faith. "The just man liveth by faith" (Gal. 3, 11), that is, conforms his conduct to his faith. "What shall it profit," asked St. James (chapter 2), "if a man say he hath faith, but hath not (corresponding) works? Shall faith be able to save him? The devils believe," but that does not

save them, for their conduct belies their faith. "As the body without the spirit (soul) is dead, so faith without works, is dead," and therefore unable alone to save us. To be a saving faith, our faith must be a living faith, a faith that is accompanied with the works which it prescribes.

Faith, in the first place, requires us to pay due honor to God and to His Church; and this we can do only by faithfully keeping their commandments. It is our duty to say our prayers every day, in order to pay to God our homage, to thank Him for His numberless blessings, to beg His forgiveness for our shortcomings and to petition Him for the favors we need daily, nay, even hourly. Faith teaches that we belong wholly to God and are wholly dependent on Him both as to what we have and as to what we are. It is, then, our duty to acknowledge our total dependence on Him by seeking to please Him in all our words, thoughts and actions, and by having recourse to Him for help and strength in all our wants, and especially in times of danger, whether corporal or spiritual.

Faith requires us to "hear the Church," that is, to submit not only our reason, but also our will, our conduct to her decrees, to her precepts, for she has received from God the power "to bind and to loose." It is, therefore, our sacred obligation to keep her commandments by observing the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence, by hearing Mass and resting from unneces-

sary servile works on Sundays and Feasts of obligation, and receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist within the appointed time.

Moreover, we do not comply with the obligations of faith, if we neglect to hear the word of God, or to acquire the necessary knowledge of the mysteries and duties of our holy religion. In our age and country the Catholic cannot be guiltless who does not know his faith well enough to be able to speak correctly concerning the principal mysteries of faith, because his ignorance is more or less wilful. There are so many occasions of hearing the word of God, so many good and instructive Catholic books and papers fit to enlighten him on this all-important matter, that only those Catholics can remain ignorant of their faith who are indifferent to it. It is, therefore, the duty of every Catholic to hear the word of God regularly, and to read Catholic books and papers, especially on Sundays.

It is also an indispensable obligation for every Catholic, whether married or single, to manifest his zeal for God's honor and worship by contributing according to his means to the support of his pastor, his parish church, and the schools and other good works of the parish and the diocese. This is not mere charity, but strict justice, a lawful debt which every one is bound to pay.

Those who intend to get married, should be careful to observe the most wise laws of the Church concerning

the Sacrament and the state of Matrimony. They should beware of endangering their faith by marrying non-Catholics or careless and indifferent Catholics. Those who disobey the laws of the Church concerning Marriage are no better than rebels against the authority of the Church and her divine Founder. What profit is it for you to call yourself a Catholic, if you live like a heretic or an unbeliever? You cannot be a true Catholic, a true child of God, unless you live up to the laws of the Church. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican" (Mat. 18, 17).

Your house should offer unmistakable signs of your faith. Its ornaments should be in accordance with the faith of a true, staunch Catholic and not have the appearance of the residence of an unbeliever. You should, therefore, exclude therefrom whatever is unbecoming in a child of God, in a member of the holy Catholic Church. Hence you should not suffer therein either immodest pictures, statues, books and papers, or infidel and heretical works. For all these are not only wholly inconsistent with your faith, but they are a disgrace to the house of a Catholic. You should, therefore, keep all such objects away from your house, and adorn it with holy pictures, not only in your bedroom, but also in your parlor, as an open profession of your holy faith. Why should you be ashamed of your faith before your visitors, who, unless they are ill-bred, will

not venture to insult your religion in your own house! Be sure to have a crucifix, some blessed candles and a constant supply of holy water. It happens sometimes that when the priest goes to administer the last sacraments to a dying Catholic, he does not find in the house any crucifix, candles or holy water, but must send for them to some other Catholic family in the neighborhood! In many Catholic families the members assemble for prayers in common at night before a little altar decorated with a statue of the Sacred Heart, or of the Blessed Virgin.

You should, moreover, have in your parlor, or sitting-room, some good books, some Catholic papers or periodicals, both for your own use and that of your visitors. What a shame that in the houses of some Catholics there should be found, instead of Catholic books and papers, the obscene poets and the more or less immoral fashionable novels! These, like Satan, are lying in wait, seeking whom they may devour! Such Catholics are a disgrace to the Catholic Church and her divine Founder, and are usually very ignorant of the doctrines and obligations of their holy faith.

On the other hand, the best, the most intelligent, the most generous, the most fervent and exemplary Catholics are precisely those who read Catholic books and papers. They know and appreciate their holy faith; they can explain and defend its doctrines; they take a lively interest in everything that concerns it, in its prog-

ress, persecutions and victories, and have their salvation at heart, and are always willing to make sacrifices to promote the welfare of the Church, their own salvation and the salvation of their neighbor.

Faith imposes very weighty obligations on parents. Your first and principal duty, as parents, consists in bringing up your children in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith. From the day they are first able to lisp, you should teach them the holy names of Jesus and Mary; then gradually to recite short prayers and learn the chief mysteries of faith. You should endeavor to inspire them with a tender love for Jesus and Mary and a lively horror of sin. When your children attain the age of discretion, that is, about their seventh year, more or less, it is your duty to see that they keep the precepts of the Church, that is, hear Mass on all Sundays and feasts of obligation, observe the laws of abstinence, go to confession and, according to the decree of Pope Pius X, dated August 8, 1910, make their first holy Communion, after a preparation and instruction suited to their capacity. The same Pope most earnestly recommends frequent, and even daily, holy Communion, not only to yourselves but even to your young children after their first holy Communion. There is no more powerful means than this to keep them pure and innocent. Bear also in mind that in all that regards salvation it is your sacred duty to give your children the benefit of your own good example, and that good

example is far more persuasive and effective than precept and instruction.

It is, moreover, your duty to send your children to none but good Catholic schools. This is not a matter of choice on your part, but a most sacred duty. It were better not to send them at all to school than to send them to institutions where they may learn everything, except what it behooves them most to know, the doctrines, obligations and practice of their holy faith. It is, therefore, your duty to send your children only to those schools in which they will be *practically* taught the Catholic faith. The neglect of this duty endangers not only the salvation of your children, but yours likewise.

Furthermore, you should constantly watch over the morals and conduct of your children, especially when their passions are beginning to wax strong, lest, through secret vicious practices and evil associations, they lose both their innocence and their faith. Sad experience testifies that our youth do not lose their faith, or grow careless in its practice, until their innocence has suffered shipwreck. You are bound to keep your children from reading books and papers capable of awakening their passions and ruining their innocence. Permit them to read only such books and periodicals as are calculated to improve their minds and their morals, and promote the salvation of their souls. Give them in all this the good example, which is more necessary and more persuasive than all the good advice in the world. Teach them

habits of industry and economy, and see that they shun idleness and employ their time well. Do not let them get fond of vanity and worldly pleasures. Never permit them to keep dangerous company or frequent places of dangerous amusement. Strive to make home agreeable and pleasant to them, and join or accompany them in their recreations. Do not allow them to keep company in private with persons of the opposite sex, especially if they are not yet marriageable or fit to assume the grave responsibilities of matrimony. It is a grievous sin for you to expose the virtue and innocence of your children to the temptations and dangers of solitary company-keeping. Do not permit them to keep company with non-Catholics or with vicious persons, or to be engaged to them, lest their faith be endangered by a mixed or unbecoming marriage. All these points are of the highest importance and their observance is necessary to insure your own salvation and the fidelity of your children to the Catholic faith.

Moreover, your holy faith imposes on you special obligations as a member of society, as a citizen. You should never be ashamed to appear in public as a practical Catholic, whenever the occasion requires it. On such occasions you should practise your faith, or defend it, not by violence or abuse, but by explaining its teaching and, if in your power, by refuting the false charges against it. This shows you how necessary it is for you to study your faith by regularly hearing the word of

God and habitually reading Catholic books and periodicals. But your zeal for your faith should go even farther. You should endeavor to propagate your faith in your private conversations, by your writings, your lectures, by liberally contributing to Catholic works, charities and institutions, by spreading Catholic literature, and especially by your own good example as a practical Catholic. You may not be able to effect much for the faith in other ways, but, at least, you can always give your fellow-men the example of a truly virtuous life. "Let your light so shine before men," says our divine Saviour to us all, "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5, 16). The habitual good example of a Catholic layman is a most powerful and persuasive argument in favor of the divine origin of the Catholic Church. Were all Catholics to live up to their faith and give a good example to their neighbor, the whole world would, in the course of time, become Catholic.

Catholic citizens should vote according to their conscience, and especially never vote a law or measure in any way detrimental to our holy religion.

SOME CAUSES OF THE LOSS OF THE FAITH

The gift of the true faith is the greatest blessing of God in this life, for, says St. Paul, "without faith it is

impossible to please God" (Hebr. 11, 6); in other words, faith is necessary to salvation. The true faith is a treasure so great that we should, in order to preserve it, be ready to make every sacrifice, even that of our very life, as the martyrs did. Nevertheless, there have been in every age, and especially in ours, quite a number of Catholics who have strayed away from their faith and even lost it entirely. Let us examine some of the causes that lead to the loss of the faith.

1. Pride is one of the causes of the loss of the faith. There are several kinds of pride. One kind is the pride of wealth, of a high-standing position in society, of worldly fashion. Those who are possessed by this kind of pride consider that the Catholic Church does not harmonize with the demands of the circle they move in, for her churches and schools are filled chiefly with the poor and the rude, with hard-working men and women, and not with the rich, the genteel, the fashionable. They are eager and anxious to belong to "the upper-class" in all things, even in religion; and, therefore, they prefer to flock to some genteel and fashionable heretical church, from which the poor, the laboring class are practically excluded. Some of them join a "select" club, or even a forbidden secret society, and would feel greatly humbled and disgraced were they seen kneeling among the poor and the hard-working men and women in a Catholic Church.

Others are victims of the pride of the intellect.

These Catholics, whose knowledge of their holy religion is very superficial, think wonders of themselves and of their learning, although they possess but a smattering of mathematics, physics, geology, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, law, literature and politics, and are wholly ignorant of logic, the science of right reasoning, and yet they deem themselves equal to the discussion and solution of the deepest and most intricate questions in philosophy and theology. How truly do these shallow and arrogant sciolists verify the saying of St. Paul; "Science puffeth up" (I Cor. 8, 1). One of these, an obscure physician, would no longer believe in the existence of the human soul, for, he said, "I have dissected many a corpse, but I never found a soul in any of them"! And that silly physician was not aware of his stupidity in looking for the soul in a lifeless corpse, and he, therefore, gave up his holy faith for infidelity, as so many others had done before him! Such persons throw overboard their reason, their common sense, before losing their faith. Their pride, their arrogance is so great, that they would feel themselves degraded, were they to submit their *transcendent reason* to any authority, human or divine, or to believe what they cannot understand, were it revealed even by the all-knowing God Himself! They consider themselves self-sufficient and not in need of either God or His Church!

Some Catholics lose their faith on account of their

covetousness. They are above all anxious to get rich at any price. They have no use for a faith, for a religion that does not confer or lead to wealth. The great argument which, in the sixteenth century, caused so many among the petty sovereigns, the nobles and others to join the ranks of Luther and other pretended Reformers, was the wish to have a share in the spoils of the Catholic Church and her religious orders. In our own times not a few Catholics give up their faith to obtain a lucrative office, to contract a rich marriage, to further their temporal interests by joining a secret society, a fashionable church or an anti-Catholic club or association!

Human respect causes many Catholics to give up the practice of their faith; and the neglect of practising their faith leads them gradually to become practically unbelievers. Every man naturally likes to be well thought of by his fellow-men, especially by his associates, and, therefore, endeavors to please them. Wherefore he feels inclined to make himself agreeable to them by speaking and acting like them. If his associates are good and virtuous, he endeavors to be like them, or at least to *appear* good and virtuous. But he who associates with the wicked, with the irreligious, fears to displease them, and does not wish them to consider and ridicule him as singular and "priest-ridden." He therefore soon begins to speak and act as they speak and act, and will gradually give up the practice of

virtue and of his faith. Thus whilst he intends to escape their sneers, he is almost imperceptibly led to violate his most sacred obligations, and in return for his mean, cowardly and sinful subserviency, he becomes the victim of human respect and the ignoble slave of the worthless opinions and base caprice of evil-doers! In this manner a man gradually becomes a drunkard, a gambler, a thief, an adulterer, a member of a secret society, an unbeliever, a scoffer of religion. How foolish, how degrading thus to become the cringing slave of human respect, in order to secure or retain the goodwill of profligate associates! And does the victim of human respect actually attain his object? Do his evil companions really esteem, respect, and trust him? No, far from it; in their hearts they despise him as unprincipled, mean, and cowardly! *How* does a true Catholic act, when he is compelled by unavoidable circumstances to work, to associate with such companions? He shows his manliness, his moral courage in standing by his faith and its obligations in spite of their sneers, of their constant persecutions! And what is the result? He is true to his faith, to his duty, and even if his companions scoff at him for this, nevertheless, in their consciences, in their hearts, they cannot withhold their respect, their esteem and even their very confidence from one who is manly and courageous enough to disregard their sneers and scoffing, and remain true to his God, to his holy faith! In fact, they cannot help ad-

miring the noble courage which they are unable, unwilling to imitate!

The ruling passion causes a number of Catholics to lose their faith, as we shall now see. In some the ruling passion is hatred. They have not only a dislike, but even a real hatred of some one, on account of a real or imaginary injury, and they will not forgive the offender; they refuse to make any effort to overcome their hatred. They, therefore, at first omit going to confession, because they know they are unworthy of absolution. Later on they fail going to hear Mass, to hear the word of God; gradually they grow hardened and give up all prayer, to get rid of their remorse, and finally abandon or lose their faith.

Another Catholic has enriched himself by dishonest means; he has perhaps ruined his rivals in business, or increased his means by taking advantage of hard times to pay insufficient wages to his poor workmen, or grown rich by graft in a public office. He will not go to confession, because he knows he cannot be absolved from his sins of injustice, unless he makes restitution. His downward course in the faith naturally leads him to the same result as that of the vindictive.

Another Catholic has become a drunkard; he has lost all moral power through drink; and he will not discharge his duties as a Catholic; in fact, he has not the strength to do so, for he will not make use of his only chances of salvation, the giving up of the occasion of his

sin, going to confession as frequently as necessary to enable him to reform. Hence he gradually neglects all the duties required of him by his holy faith, and practically belongs to the class of men that have no religion.

One of the greatest, if not the very greatest cause of the loss of faith, is the vice of impurity. The impure man prefers the gratification of his animal passions to the law of God. To indulge these passions he tramples on the dictates of his reason, on virtue, on duty, destroys his health and even forfeits his good name and the respect of his fellow-men. His conduct resembles more that of an irrational being than that of one possessed of reason and free-will. As far as in him lies, he destroys the image of God in his soul. His intellect, his perception of things spiritual and heavenly, are weakened in proportion to the indulgence of his beastly cravings. The nearer he stoops to the brute, the more lowly and debased his views and aspirations. The impure Catholic at first experiences remorse for his shameful sin and dreads the eternal punishment it deserves. If he, nevertheless, persists in gratifying his impure passions, they daily wax stronger and more exacting, whilst his will thereby becomes proportionately weaker. To quiet the remorse following his sin, he has recourse to the false maxim that "God is too good to punish eternally a momentary sin, a mere weakness, a simply natural act"! Beginning thus to waver

in his faith and constantly urged on by the low passion which has enslaved him and blinded his noblest faculty, he soon rejects not only the eternity of hell, but also its very existence and the authority of the Church teaching this truth, and all this to palliate and justify and continue his career of lust, until he has lost all faith, and becomes too sensual, too beastly to appreciate anything above the gratification of his low passion; he at last becomes too carnal to appreciate what is above the indulgence of his impure passion, as St. Paul declares: "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand" (1 Cor. 2, 14). Such a one at last becomes an unbeliever and even a scoffer of religion! Strange it may seem, yet it is perfectly true and confirmed by experience; a pure Catholic young man, a pure Catholic young woman, as a rule, never loses the Catholic faith! What a strong argument is not this in favor of the truth of the Catholic faith!

OTHER CAUSES LEADING TO THE LOSS OR NEGLECT OF THE FAITH

A large percentage of the Catholics who neglect to practise their faith, or fall away from their faith altogether, have never been properly instructed or trained in it. To implant the faith firmly in the minds and

hearts of children, it is necessary to impart to them a thorough knowledge of its teachings and duties and to rear them in its love and practice, so that the fulfilment of its duties may become to them a second nature and a labor of love. Let us now see what kind of religious education or training certain parents give to their children.

In the first place, some good, pious Catholic parents fail in this their chief obligation towards their children, not for the want of a good will, but for want of tact and good judgment. Experience testifies that some of the worst criminals and rankest unbelievers had good, pious parents. How can we account for this? A number of such parents are too lax in rearing their children. They let them do as they please, let them grow wild, without due restraint, without due correction. They seem not to be aware that their children, like all the other children of Adam, are born with the germ of all the vices as well as with the germ of all the virtues, and also with an inclination to evil. They seem to ignore that their child is a vine that needs pruning, bending, tying down; or a rough diamond that needs much cutting and polishing, and that it is their sacred duty, not only to give him a good example, but also to repress his evil inclinations, to correct his faults, to direct and encourage him in combating his passions, and to cause him to respect and submit to authority and practise virtue. Just as a fruit-tree suffered to grow wild will

produce no good fruit, so also children allowed to grow wild, to do as they please, will hardly ever become good, virtuous Catholics.

Certain other good, pious Catholic parents follow the very opposite line of conduct. They are overstrict, needlessly severe and harsh in rearing their children, require too much of them, and fail to inspire them with the love of their holy faith and its practice. Being ever threatened with the direst divine punishments in the next life for the slightest offense, the children get disgusted with the duties holy faith requires of them, acquire a hatred of our holy religion and its practices, and readily give up practising it as soon as they are beyond the control of their parents.

Another class of Catholic parents do not practise their religion and give bad example to their children. And their children, even if they have been instructed in the mysteries and duties of the Catholic faith and have made their first holy Communion and been confirmed, soon end in following the bad example of their parents, for they do what they see their parents do. The latter never go to hear Mass, to confession or holy Communion, why should their children go? In fact such children have never been properly taught the heinousness of transgressing the commandments of God and His Church; they have never been inspired with the love and fear of God; they hear their parents cursing, breaking the commandments of God; in the course of time

they do as their parents do, and live more like heathens than like Christians. It is no wonder if such children are soon lost to the faith.

There are other Catholic parents who are considered respectable by their fellow-men; but they are Catholics only in name, for they are deficient in even ordinary piety; they are worldly-minded above all. They inspire their children with the love of the world and its vain goods, honors, pleasures and amusements; they allow their children to frequent all kinds of worldly company and amusements, provided these are respectable in a worldly sense, however dangerous to salvation they may otherwise be; they encourage them to adopt every new fashion, to read every new novel, every book and periodical, except those that might prove beneficial to their soul. What is the result of such training? The children become the votaries and slaves of the world and its false maxims, neglectful of their religious duties, of the salvation of their immortal souls, and have nothing Catholic but the name.

Another class of Catholic parents, forgetful of their sacred obligation of giving their children a thorough and practical Catholic education in a good Catholic school or institution, send their children to godless schools and godless institutions. The natural inclination to evil, which is inherent in all the children of Adam from their very infancy, demands for them the restraining and corrective influence of a good religious

training, for without religion there is no sound morality. This clearly proves the obligation of Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools and institutions. Such is the injunction of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore: "We not only exhort Catholic parents with a paternal love, but we *command* them by the whole extent of our authority to procure for their beloved offspring, given them by God, born again to Christ in baptism, and destined for heaven, a truly Christian and Catholic education, and entirely to preserve and safeguard it during the whole period of infancy and youth from the dangers of a mere secular education, and therefore to send their dear children to the parochial schools or other truly Christian schools, unless in particular cases in which the *Bishop* judges that an exception may be permitted." This decree proves that parents are not free to decide that they have good reasons for sending their children to non-Catholic schools, but this whole matter is left to the decision of their respective Bishops, and that the Bishop's decision must be held as sacred and binding by the parents. Moreover, parents should beware of sending their sons, at an age when their passions are developed and wax strong, to colleges or universities in which they would be removed from all due religious influence, unless they have their Bishop's approval, who will withhold it, if there be in such institutions real danger for the faith or morals of the Catholic youth. Outside of Catholic

schools, colleges, academies and universities, it can never be known beforehand what kinds of doctrines and principles, whether good or bad, true or false, will be instilled into the youthful minds of the pupils.

But now arises the question whether Catholic parents do their full duty towards securing the faith of their children by having them educated in Catholic institutions. We find an appropriate answer to this question in *The Ave Maria* for July 18, 1914, under the title of "A Catholic Atmosphere," which we here insert. "Much is said amongst us," says *The Ave Maria*, "of the paramount necessity of preserving in our schools what is aptly termed 'a Catholic atmosphere,' and that this Catholic atmosphere may not be lost, it is stoutly claimed that they should be Catholic not only in name, but in reality. But there is a place where a Catholic atmosphere is even more necessary, more important, its absence more hurtful, and its presence even more effective than in the schools. We mean the Catholic home. A Catholic atmosphere in the schools most certainly we must have; but its effect can be, and unfortunately often is, nullified to a great extent by lack of a Catholic atmosphere at home.

"We want, above all, this truly Catholic atmosphere in the home. We want it primarily for our children, upon whose efficient Catholic training the future of Catholicity depends. But we want it also for ourselves, if we are to live good, healthy Catholic lives. We shall

not find this Catholic atmosphere around us, outside our dwellings or outside our churches; far from it. The atmosphere in which we live is of a nature to stifle all faith and all spirituality with the murk and mist of materialistic ideals and practices. We also, as well as our children, need a Catholic atmosphere in which to live and breathe; and we must make it for ourselves in our homes, in the place where we live, where our most intimate hours are passed.

“Now, what do we mean by this Catholic atmosphere? The metaphor is easy to understand. The atmosphere is the air surrounding the earth; the air which we breathe, and which is so necessary for the life of our bodies, that, if we are deprived of it for a few minutes only, we die. So it is with the Catholic atmosphere. Take it away, and before long Catholic life languishes, and eventually dies.

“And if you ask in what does this Catholic atmosphere consist, we may appeal again to the physical atmosphere from which this figure of speech is taken. The air, as we know, is composed of various elementary gases combined together. The spiritual Catholic atmosphere which is so necessary to vigorous Catholic life is also composed of various elements, which may be summed up in these three: faith, reverence, and love. These are the three elements, forming the Catholic atmosphere, which Catholics have nobly striven to maintain in their schools; and these three, faith,

reverence and love, should be the spiritual atmosphere, sweet and healthy and spiritually invigorating, of every Catholic home.

“It would be impossible to exaggerate the extreme importance of this Catholic atmosphere in the family life. The want of it is enough to nullify and destroy the work done in the school. How often have priests this sad experience, that children, apparently good and pious, as long as they are attending school, going regularly to Holy Mass and the Sacraments, fall away quickly and often ‘go to the bad’ altogether, when school-days are over. It is because there is no Catholic atmosphere in the home; because those three elements (above mentioned) are wanting in the daily life of the family.

“Even before a child leaves school, the sad difference between school and home has a noticeably deteriorating effect. A child cannot be expected to take so seriously the good religious teaching received from teachers and priests, when it sees that teaching and all Catholic practice neglected, and, by act, if not in word, flouted at home! How many children, for instance, fail to be in their places in church during vacation time! This is a sad but not uncommon fact! There is no Catholic atmosphere at home!

“Our country is not a Catholic country; it has no Catholic atmosphere like Ireland, or Tuscany, or parts of Switzerland and Germany. No sweet image of

Mary, Queen of heaven, or of her divine Son upon His cross, looks down upon the wayfarer on our country road or our busy street. Hence the Catholic atmosphere in the home needs amongst us most particular and careful cultivation. Sometimes, in some sickness, oxygen has to be supplied to the patient. We are in a similar position. Outside we cannot breathe. There is no spiritual atmosphere that will supply our needs; no faith, no reverence, no love; that is, none of these diffused abroad and common property, like God's sweet air. We must get these things and keep them in our dwellings; we must infuse them into our family life.

“How shall we do it? It is a simple matter, if we have a good will. The very statement of what a Catholic atmosphere consists in will suggest the means of producing it in our homes. Faith, reverence, love. We must first have them ourselves. Faith, a firm, staunch faith in God and in all He teaches us by His Church; faith which will express itself in action; in regularity at Holy Mass, at confession and Communion; in care about prayer; in observance of Catholic practices.

“The Catholic home ought to be full of faith; and of faith made evident, so that one could tell that the house was Catholic as soon as one entered it. In some houses we can tell this; in others every sign that the inmates are of the Faith is out of sight. Pious objects, together with pious practices, should abound in every

Catholic house. Children should be taught what they mean and how to use them.

“But this means that there must be faith, strong, living, *perceptible* faith, in the parents. Without this the Catholic atmosphere will not be *diffused*; it will be like oxygen shut up in its cylinder. Then reverence, inculcated by example and precept, by instant rebuke, firm and unyielding, though at the same time gentle, of any irreverence or real carelessness on the part of the younger ones in regard to sacred things. And above all love, love of God, led up to, secured and cultivated by the visibly expressed love of all that belongs to Him; of Holy Church and of all that she makes use of in her rites and ceremonies; a tender and affectionate love to Jesus and Mary and patron saints. Let the love of all these burn as a fire in the heart of the Catholic mother, and her children will also take fire at it.

“Indeed it is necessary in these unbelieving days in which we live, when men are going away from Christ, when sin is thought nothing of, when the spiritual life is stifled and the supernatural in no way grasped, that we Catholics should make sure that our homes, like cool oases in the arid desert, shall be filled with the pure air of Catholic faith and Catholic reverence and Catholic love, and watered with refreshing dews of grace that prayer and piety will assuredly bring down from on high.”

Finally, it is principally the lack of this Catholic

atmosphere in mixed marriages that causes them to be so dangerous and even, in the majority of cases, so fatal to the faith of the Catholics who contract them, and of their offspring. It seldom happens that a Catholic, well-grounded in the faith and in its practice, marries a non-Catholic. Noble but rare are some exceptions, and such exceptions are to be found chiefly in places where the Catholics are few. Experience shows that a mixed marriage usually argues in the Catholic the lack of a fervent faith. How can a Catholic, who is intimately penetrated by the truth that they who will not hear the Church are no better than the heathens and publicans and can have no share in the heavenly kingdom, so unite himself or herself with such a one, that, according to the Saviour's words, the two are made one and inseparable? Such Catholics show a weak faith and even religious indifference, as if "it mattered not what a man believes, provided only he be honest." Such a disposition before marriage already indicates how great a risk the faith of such a Catholic runs in a mixed marriage. Accurate statistics prove that the majority of such Catholics, sooner or later, lose their faith, and the greater number of children issued from such marriages become either heretics or unbelievers. We need not wonder that the Catholic Church "abhors" such marriages and only regretfully and reluctantly grants the permission to contract them, and this only for serious reasons, as our divine Saviour says

concerning the Mosaic indulgence regarding divorce among the Israelites, "on account of the hardness of their heart" (Mat. 19, 8).

If those Catholics who, through some worldly motive or interest, give up or endanger their faith, could only realize how low they fall even in the estimation of respectable and fair-minded non-Catholics, whenever they are ashamed of their holy religion and its obligations or give it up altogether, they would find therein an incentive to greater fidelity.

What is it to lose the Catholic faith? "It is," says an eloquent lecturer, "to fling back in the face of Almighty God the greatest and most valuable gift He can bestow on man. It is to spurn the Sacraments which God gave us as means of salvation. It is to deny Jesus Christ before men, and to have Him deny us before His Father who is in heaven. It is to sell for a filthy mess of the world's pottage the precious inheritance of our ancestors, which the apostles preached, for which countless heroes have fought and bled, for which millions of martyrs suffered and died, and without which there would not be a Christian on earth or a saint in heaven. The loss of the Catholic faith means the loss of God as our Father; the loss of the Son of God as our Brother; the loss of the Holy Ghost as our Guide and Comforter; the loss of the Blessed Virgin as our Mother; the loss of the saints in heaven as our kinsfolk and protectors, and the loss of all right and

claim to the endless bliss of heaven. And what do we barter our blessed faith for? In order to turn our souls over to the service of Satan, to be his during life, and his in an eternity of woe! What Catholic will not pause and shudder ere he plunges into such a pitfall!"

HOW TO PRESERVE AND INCREASE OUR FAITH

The most necessary and effectual means of preserving and increasing our faith is to practise it faithfully, to perform faithfully the works it prescribes, for, says St. James (I, 20), "faith without works is dead." Faith, being a virtue, implies a habit. A habit is formed and strengthened by repeated acts. The more carefully and frequently these acts are performed the more deeply rooted the habit becomes and the greater the facility of performing them, until they at last are produced almost naturally and spontaneously, and the habit becomes a kind of necessity, a second nature. This holds good for all kinds of habit, for bad habits, or vices, as well as for good habits, or virtues. Hence our faith ought to be so deeply rooted in us as to become a second nature to us in its practice, and should be as easy and as natural to us as drawing breath. To attain this most desirable end, it behooves us to perform as

carefully and frequently as possible the various practices of our faith.

The first among the practices of our faith is prayer. Prayer is of a twofold necessity to us: first, as a practical exercise of our faith; and secondly, as a means of obtaining the indispensable divine assistance for its preservation and increase. We cannot practise any of the supernatural virtues without the help of divine grace, nor can we without it perform anything deserving a supernatural or heavenly reward. Prayer is the ordinary and efficacious means of obtaining divine grace. "Amen, amen I say unto you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you. . . . Ask, and you shall receive" (John 16, 23, 26). Prayer is, moreover, an exercise of faith, for we need faith in order to pray to God. Hence the oftener and the more earnestly we pray, the stronger and firmer our faith becomes, both on account of the repeated acts of faith we make by praying, and on account of God's assistance to those who pray. Let us often, in our prayers, thank God for having called us to the true faith out of His pure bounty, without any merit of ours, and beseech Him in the words of the apostles: "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17, 5). What contributes very much to the preservation and increase of faith in a family is the practice of saying night prayers together. Hence every night at a stated hour let all the members

of the family assemble together before a little altar, or before a crucifix or a picture of the Blessed Virgin, under the direction of the father, for night prayers and the examination of conscience. Moreover, let us, when we assist at Holy Mass or receive Holy Communion, earnestly beseech God to impart to us a lively faith, and rather to let us die than permit that we should ever lose or even endanger our faith.

Moreover, to preserve and increase our faith it behooves us constantly to fulfil the obligations it imposes. These are chiefly: to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy-days of obligations, to abstain from flesh meats and to fast on the days prescribed, to confess our sins, at the very least once a year, to receive worthily Holy Communion within the Easter time, and to contribute according to our means to the support of the church and of our pastor. This is the very least that is required of us. Those Catholics who wish to acquire the lively faith which can surely secure them against danger to their salvation, will do a great deal more than this. For instance, they will, like all fervent Catholics, endeavor daily to assist devoutly at holy Mass, to be present at all the public services in their parish church, and to receive holy Communion, if not daily as the Church desires, at least weekly or monthly. Experience proves that these pious practices are among the most powerful means of preserving and increasing the faith. Furthermore, generosity in contributing to the support of the

parish church, of its pastor and all its good works, is a proof of one's interest in and attachment to his holy faith; but the want of such generosity, especially in those who abound in earthly goods, is a proof of greater attachment to earthly goods than to the faith.

Another very powerful means of preserving and increasing one's faith consists in assisting regularly at the sermons and instructions, and in frequently reading Catholic books, papers and periodicals. Even learned theologians are liable to forget their theology unless they review it from time to time. How much more is a layman, who has probably never thoroughly learned the doctrines of faith, apt to forget them, unless he frequently refreshes his memory by hearing the Word of God and by pious reading? If he neglects these practices, he will not only gradually forget the truths of faith, but also run the risk of imperceptibly losing his faith altogether. Those who are passionately fond of light reading, and read without discrimination all that comes in their way, are usually averse to hearing the Word of God and to pious reading, and thus greatly endanger their faith. Let us, then, resolve to hear the Word of God every Sunday and Holyday, and to read, especially on those days, Catholic books and Catholic papers, which contain a large amount of necessary information concerning the truths of faith and the events in the Church throughout the world, in which every true Catholic should take a deep interest.

We cannot long preserve the faith unless we shun bad company, that is, unbelievers and scoffers at religion, and avoid unnecessary or too intimate intercourse with non-Catholics, and with bad Catholics whose conduct is not exemplary. Intimate companionship with such will, sooner or later, lead us astray from the faith and its practice, and contaminate us with the accursed spirit of religious indifference. If you feel called to the state of matrimony, choose as your partner in life only one who has and practises the true faith. It is usually a great misfortune to wed a non-Catholic or a bad Catholic. Beware of joining secret societies. Do not join societies that may, sooner or later, prove dangerous to your faith or lead you astray. Bear in mind that the Church approves only *Catholic societies*, that is, such societies as are subject to the laws and regulations of the Church. Such societies and pious Sodalities and Confraternities, as the League of the Sacred Heart, the Holy Name, are very effectual means of keeping Catholics true to their holy faith. Before joining secular societies, it would be well previously to consult your confessor or your pastor, so that you may keep from joining such as may prove very dangerous to your faith. In all these matters be guided by the Church, for there can be no salvation for him who will not hear the Church (Matt. 18, 17).

Finally, a sure means of preserving and increasing your faith is a pure life. Observe chastity according

to your state of life, and your faith will be secure, because experience teaches that, so long as you remain pure, nothing will ever be able to induce you to give up the practice of your faith. But from the moment you begin to gratify your inordinate passions, you will, in order to quiet remorse, begin to doubt, first, the eternity of hell, which is the due punishment of the vice of lust, and next the very existence of hell, and will continue your doubts until you will end by losing your faith altogether. Shun, therefore, carefully all that deserves eternal punishment, and you shall never have any cause to fear hell or doubt its existence. Be, therefore, pure in body and soul, and your faith and your salvation are secure, for, says our divine Saviour, "blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8).

We must at once resist all temptations against faith. Some are tempted against faith through their own fault, because they have either read or wilfully listened to matters opposed to faith. Such reading, such listening is sinful and exceedingly dangerous, and must, therefore, be avoided. Other temptations against faith are not wilful in themselves and may occur to holy persons, and even great saints have been troubled with them. When such temptations come to us, we must not reason with them to overcome them, but should reject them at once as we should do with temptations to impurity. It would be well, then, to make acts of faith, saying, for instance, "O, my God, I firmly believe

all that the holy Catholic Church believes, because Thou hast revealed it, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived." "Whenever doubts and temptations against faith present themselves," says St. Alphonsus, "let us not argue, but simply renew the act of faith, and have recourse to prayer."

We are obliged openly to profess our faith by word and deed, whenever the honor of God or our neighbor's edification requires it. We ought not to be afraid to defend our holy religion whenever it is assailed in our presence. But in doing so we should avoid entering into a wordy or personal controversy. The immense majority of those who attack the Church and her faith and clergy, do so, not so much out of malice, but rather out of ignorance and prejudice, for they know little or nothing of the Catholic religion. To them we should calmly and kindly expose or explain the doctrines of the Catholic Church, if they are willing to hear us; but we should shun all religious disputes, for they usually arouse bitter feelings on both sides. In explaining Catholic doctrines and condemning the opposite errors, we should always be all charity and gentleness toward those who are in error. Let us, moreover, never lose sight of the fact that the most persuasive argument in favor of the truth of our holy religion is our good example, that is, a conscientious observance of the commandments of God and of the precepts of the Church.

Our faith is our greatest treasure on earth, and we

cannot too greatly prize it. Let us daily thank God on our knees for this inestimable gift, which He has vouchsafed to confer on us without any merit on our part, in preference to so many of our fellow-men who are in religious error and darkness. We should be ready, for its sake, to suffer and die for our faith, as the martyrs did. But as we shall not likely be called upon to undergo martyrdom for its sake, let us at least live our faith, that is, practise it faithfully during our whole life.

The lighted candle that was given us at baptism is the emblem of our faith. Happy shall we be if we carry it lighted as our guide and protection throughout the storms of life until the hour of our death, when it will again be placed lighted in our hands as an emblem of our hope in that terrible hour of obtaining, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mercy of God and the eternal crown due to the works of faith. May we then be all able to say with St. Paul: "I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me" (2 Tim. 4, 7, 8).

PRAYER OF A FAITHFUL CATHOLIC

O, my God, I thank Thee from my inmost heart for the inestimable gift of faith bestowed on me without

any merit or claim on my part, in preference to so many others far more deserving of it than myself. Grant me, O, Lord, an increase of faith, and enable me to keep faithfully all its obligations until death. O, Mary, my dear Mother, obtain for me a lively faith and the grace to practise it all the days of my life. Amen.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO NON-CATHOLICS WHO ARE SINCERELY SEEKING TO FIND THE TRUE CHURCH.

1. Salvation, according to the words our divine Saviour addressed to His apostles when sending them to preach the Gospel to all nations, is possible only to those who believe what the apostles preached, and have become members of the Church they founded: "Going, therefore, teach ye 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 whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. 28, 19, 20). "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16, 16).

2. Non-Catholics who have doubts as to whether they belong to the Church of Jesus Christ, are bound in conscience to clear their doubts on this all-important matter of their eternal salvation, for, says our divine

Saviour, "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat. 16, 26). A man is, therefore, bound to make every sacrifice to secure the salvation of his immortal soul, for this is the only end for which God has created him, and if his soul is lost, all is lost, and its loss can never be repaired.

3. In your search after the True Church, you should not overlook the claims of the Catholic Church. First, the Catholic Church *alone* can trace her origin and existence to the time of Jesus Christ and His apostles, as history clearly proves. There never was any other church prior to her, nor contemporary with her during the life-time of the apostles. This, in itself, is a most sure proof that she was founded by Christ and His apostles and now is, therefore, and always has been the True Church, for Jesus Christ expressly declared: "I say to thee that thou art Peter (a rock), and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates (powers) of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16, 18). The Catholic Church, once the true Church, *must always remain* the True Church, for Jesus, about to ascend to heaven, said in the clearest terms: "Behold I am with you *all days*, even to the consummation of the world" (Mat. 28, 20). It were blasphemy to assert that Jesus Christ ever forsook His Church.

In the next place, the Catholic Church is indisputably

alone truly Catholic, for she has preached to all nations, has continued to exist from the time of Christ until now, is spread throughout the whole world and is found in every country, in every clime. All other churches have been founded since the time of the apostles by men without divine mission, contrary to the requirements laid down by St. Paul: "How shall they preach, unless they be sent?" (Rom. 10.15). The other churches, moreover, are not catholic, but only local churches and restricted to a few countries.

Thirdly, it was the Catholic Church that has preserved for us and given us the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, and it was for her members alone and their wants that the apostles, by divine inspiration, wrote the books of the New Testament, for the only Christians then living were the Catholics. The Protestants appeared on earth only about fifteen hundred years later. The Scriptures belong to the Catholic Church, and she alone has the power and the competent knowledge to interpret them in the sense the Almighty Himself attaches to them, for she alone is inspired and directed by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, as our Saviour promised (John 14, 17).

Moreover, the doctrines of Jesus, being divinely revealed to us by Him, are true, and therefore, unchangeable, for truth never changes. The Catholic Church alone is unchangeable in her doctrines, in her faith. She now teaches the *identical* doctrines she taught in

the apostolic age and has taught ever since. All the other churches have, from their very beginning, been continually changing their creeds and gradually dropping therefrom the truly Christian doctrines which they first retained, so that now the majority of them are little better than mere deists, for they possess hardly any distinct Christian doctrines.

In the next place, the Catholic Church alone leads men to holiness of life by her faith, her precepts and the means of salvation and perfection she affords. All the saints that have lived since Christ have been her faithful members. All who do her bidding, save and sanctify themselves. All Catholics who go astray and lead a bad life, do so because they act in opposition to her teaching, to her commandments and neglect to use the means of salvation she offers them. Outside her pale, there are, indeed, good and virtuous persons, but no really *holy* persons, for their virtues are only natural virtues, like those of some of the ancient pagans, because those virtues are not supernatural, that is, are not founded on the true faith.

Furthermore, prayer is absolutely necessary to enable you to clear your doubts, to discover which is the True Church of Christ and to impart to you the strength and courage to embrace the truth, however great and painful the sacrifices this step may demand of you. If we pray earnestly and sincerely, we are sure of being heard, for Jesus has solemnly promised

it: "Amen, amen I say unto you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you" (John 16, 23). "I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you, *seek and you shall find*, knock and it shall be opened to you; for every one that asketh, receiveth, and *he that seeketh, findeth*, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (Luke 11, 9, 10). Pray, therefore, earnestly, with confidence and perseverance, and God will grant you the light necessary to enable you to find the truth. And since your object in seeking the truth is not merely to know it, but also to profit by it and secure your salvation by embracing the true Church and living as her faithful members, your prayer should include the request that God may also strengthen you to make all the sacrifices necessary to give up your previous errors and become true members of the Church of Christ, and thus secure your salvation.

Finally, procure a *Catholic Catechism* and some other Catholic books, such as the *New Mission Book*; read and study their contents and have recourse to some priest for explanations and instructions, and you will be astonished how reasonable, good and holy the doctrines of the Catholic Church are, and how well adapted to man's wants and aspirations!

Address daily your prayers, first, to the *Holy Ghost*:

O Holy Spirit, Spirit of Truth, deign to enlighten, direct and guide me in seeking for the True Church, and strengthen me that I may make every sacrifice

necessary to embrace her faith and live up to its requirements, so that I may thereby secure my salvation.

Next, implore our divine Saviour as follows:

Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who didst condescend to shed all Thy blood and die on the cross for my salvation, deign to give me the grace to find the True Church which Thou hast founded, out of which there is no salvation, so that I may become united to Thee as her child and thus deserve to be admitted to praise and love Thee forever in heaven.

Lastly, have recourse to her whom the angel Gabriel, sent by God, greeted as "full of grace, as blessed among women," whom St. Elizabeth "inspired by the Holy Ghost" called "the Mother of my Lord" (God), who was foretold as "the virgin" destined "to conceive and bring forth God with us," whose Son, the angel Gabriel declared "shall be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1), and who herself prophesied that thenceforth "all generations shall call me blessed," and whom all generations have called and known and prayed to as "the *Blessed Virgin Mary*"; you will do well daily to repeat to her this little prayer:

"O Blessed Virgin Mary, whom the Son of God called by the tender name of 'Mother,' and who alone among creatures could address Him as 'my Son and God,' and for whose sake our divine Saviour anticipated the time of miracles and wrought His first miracle, O Mary, pray for me, a poor sinner who am

in search of the True Church of thy divine Son, that I may be enabled to find His True Church and become one of her faithful members, and thus secure my eternal salvation."

THE END

