

The Glories Of The Catholic Church

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PART 1.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: ITS ORIGIN, NATURE AND CREDENTIALS.

Every Christian denomination that recites the Apostles' Creed, repeats the words: "I believe in... the Holy Catholic Church." The Holy Catholic Church is the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Christ founded one Church only, with definite doctrine and with a supreme visible head.

For many centuries after the time of Christ, the Catholic Church, with the Pope as its visible Head, was the acknowledged Church of Christ throughout Christendom and was the only Church claiming to be Christ's own Church.

In the eleventh century, the Greeks separated from the Church established by Christ. Their contention was that there was no supreme visible head of the Catholic Church. In the sixteenth century the Reformers, so-called, separated from the Church established by Christ. Their contention was that the Church founded by Christ had fallen into error. Since the sixteenth century the declinations which sprang from the Reformation have become so numerous that they are counted by hundreds, and have so modified their doctrine, that if the original reformers returned to earth they would not recognise the Churches they founded.

Christendom now presents three distinct religions or Churches: (1) the original Catholic Church; (2) the later Greek Church; and, (3) the modern Protestant Church. As both the Greek Church and the Protestant Church separated from the original Catholic Church because they maintain that the original Church of Christ had fallen into error, the error so essential as to justify separation it follows that both the Greek Church and the Protestant Church hold different doctrine, from the Catholic Church. Such different doctrine should be labeled Heresy. If the Catholic Church is right, the Greek and the Protestant Churches are wrong. If the Catholic Church were wrong, the original Church of Christ is wrong, for the Catholic is the only Church, which dates its origin from Christ. If therefore the original Church of Christ be in error, Christ's promise has failed, and He was not what He claimed to be. Christ claimed to be God. But God's word cannot fail, if therefore, the original Church of Christ be in error, her Founder's word was false. He was not God, and Christianity is false. (It should be pointed out that the Greek Church's ONLY significant error is a denial that Christ intended there to be a visible supreme head of the Church on earth, namely the successor of Saint Peter. In everything else the Greek or 'Orthodox' Church holds the same doctrine as the Catholic Church.)

It all comes to this, therefore: Was Christ God and did He establish a Church, which was to last forever, and to teach the truth and only the truth in religious matters?

All Christians believe that Christ is God. They affirm this belief when they recite the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His

only Son, our Lord." From Scripture it is also certain that Christ established a Church, which was to last forever and to teach His revealed truth always. They who deny that Christ is God are consistent in rejecting the Catholic Church. But, those who believe that Christ is God are inconsistent and illogical in rejecting the Catholic Church. Let me make this plain. If Christ be not God he was a fool or a fraud, and Christianity as a religion is false. But, if Christ is God, His word cannot fail. He gave His word that His Church should never falsify His doctrine. Hence, those who believe that Christ is God, must also believe that the Church He founded can never falsify His teaching.

Consistency demands that we accept the Catholic Church as the living teacher of God's truth, or we reject both her Founder and His religion; there is no midway. If Christ is God, His word is guarantee of truth, and His word has been given to the Catholic Church — the only one that goes back to Him as Founder. If Christ, however, be not God, then away with Christian belief altogether; for the basis of Christianity is the divinity of Christ, and if the basis be not sound the whole edifice is unsound.

It may be asked: If the case is as stated, how is it that any one can fail to see the logic of it? It is because either environment or education has been such as to put some people into a state of mind by which they are not open to conviction in the matter. The preaching and miracles of our divine Lord were the same for all the people who heard and saw Him, but all did not become His followers. The teaching and miracles which converted those who were open to conviction failed to convert those who were not open to conviction.

There must be the disposition to believe the truth: and the effort to learn the truth; and the determination to pay the price for the truth: if one is to know and to embrace the truth. Christ said: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The Jewish leaders wanted a messiah whose kingdom was of this world, so they blinded themselves to the evidence which Christ presented. But the great body of the people accepted the evidence, and acclaimed Christ as the Messiah as we see from the Bible:

"Many therefore of the Jews, who... had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him... The chief priests therefore, and the Pharisees, gathered a council, and said: What do we, for this man does many miracles? If we let Him alone, all will believe in Him... From that day therefore they devised to put Jesus to death"

It is clearly evident, therefore, that the same deeds which converted those open to conviction, only hardened and perverted those who were not, open to conviction. These, latter were not looking for the truth, but for what they wanted; they did not have the disposition to believe; but rather the will to have their own way. This we see from the fact that the Jewish leaders plotted murder in order to destroy the evidence, which they did not want to accept.

Hear what the Gospel says in the matter: "A great multitude of the Jews came... that they might see Lazarus, whom Christ had raised from the dead. But the chief priests thought to kill Lazarus also; because many of the Jews, by reason of him, went away and believed in Jesus. And on the next day, a great multitude that was come to the festival day, when they had heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried: Hosanna, blessed is He, that, comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel"

Why were the Jewish leaders not open to conviction, as were the people? Because the ruling element had made up their minds. They wanted a messiah who would confirm them in their worldly ambitions but Christ proclaimed, 'that His Kingdom was not of this world'. So they rejected Him, they not only rejected Him, but, by the vilest propaganda and threats ever employed among

mankind, force those who acclaimed Christ as the Messiah on Palm Sunday, to clamour for His death on Good Friday; they who shouted “Hosanna” on Sunday, cried out “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” on the following Friday.

Various things can put people into a state of mind in which, like the Scribes and Pharisees, they are not open to conviction. National or racial prejudice will cause people of one race or nation not to be open to conviction with regard, to what concerns the claims of the other race or nation. The World War (1914-1918) affords proof of this. Again, if one's welfare or interests be at stake one will frequently not be open to conviction in the case in question. Lawsuits are proof of this. Neither party to a lawsuit is ordinarily open to conviction regarding the point at issue. That is why recourse is had to litigation.

And so with regard to religion — circumstances of one kind or another may prevent people from seeing or adopting the truth. Sometimes this state of mind is culpable, sometimes it is not. God is the sole Judge. We know how people act in ordinary matters. If for instance, a person claimed to have the sole title to a piece of property to which another thought he had a claim, the other would undoubtedly look into the legality of the sole claim.

The Catholic Church claims to be the sole institution founded by Jesus and guaranteed by Him to preach His truths to the end of time. That claim is serious and worthwhile examining into. Very many of the most intellectual and upright persons of other creeds have examined into these claims of the Catholic Church and have been convinced that her claims are true and been in consequence joined to her communion. This they have done, ordinarily, at the cost of great sacrifice — socially, financially and prospectively. They have found, on investigation, that their previous notion of the Catholic Church was only a caricature of her. They found that their false idea of the Catholic Church was due to the fact that those who separated from her considered it necessary to misrepresent her in order to try to justify their stand. In this way, the information they had of her was poisoned at its source.

It has been said that much of history since the Reformation has been a conspiracy against the Catholic Church. Some people, accordingly, may not be culpable for their hostile attitude towards Christ's own Church. However — when they see the disruption of Protestant belief, and its contradictory ritual and practice, and its drift towards unbelief or paganism; and, on the other hand the definite Creed and rituals of the Catholic Church — they certainly should make, inquiries into the credentials of the only Church whose Creed has not changed since it was given to her by her divine Founder, and which claims, and has claimed from the beginning, to be the sole Church of Christ.

Christ is both divine and human. He is God from all eternity, and man from the Incarnation.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... all things were made by Him... and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:1-14).

As Christ, the Founder of the Catholic Church, is both divine and human — so also is the Church which He founded. The Catholic Church is divine in that her Founder is divine, and that she has His divine guarantee, and assistance to transmit to the end of time, without error the doctrine He imparted to her. She is human in that men, not angels, are her ministers and lay members. The doctrine of Catholic Church is divinely true; the preachers of her doctrine and the ministers of her sacraments and her members are all human with the weaknesses and passions of fallen human nature.

Christ guaranteed His Church against error — He did not guarantee her members against sin. While promising that He would abide forever with His Church, He also stated that sin would stain her fair name, but He fulminated dreadful threats against those who would be the cause of scandal. The Catholic Church, therefore, although the depository of Christ's truth, and its guardian and infallible teacher to the end of time, is, nevertheless, composed of members — clergy as well as laymen — who are weak human beings as is the rest of mankind.

God, Who permits sin, threatens the sinner with dire chastisement. He permits sin because He endowed man with free will. If man did not have the choice of good and evil, he would not be free, but bound to a certain course of conduct. God so respects man's free will that He allowed one of the twelve Apostles to use it to betray the Divine Master. But although God allowed Judas to use his free will against its Giver, Christ said of the traitor: "It were better for that man, if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24). And so in His Church, although He gives the grace and incentives for holiness of life, He allows man to use the liberty He has given him, either to observe the law or to violate it.

If one of the Twelve, under the very eyes and example of the Master, fell into grievous sin, we should not be surprised that in the course of the ages some of the ministers of His Church should prove false to their holy charge. The clergy have the weaknesses and passions of human nature just as much as laymen have. True, their lofty vocation with its accompanying graces demands higher sanctity of them, but, notwithstanding, they sometimes forget their obligations just as laymen sometimes forget theirs. Sin is greater in the clergy because of their higher ideals, and more abundant means of grace. But human nature is human nature, whether in clergy or laymen. Sometimes those who most severely criticise the clergy are themselves the worst offenders of God's law. However, that does not affect the matter in hand, which is that men — not angels — are the Ministers of God's word, and that, consequently they are not immune from the sins of mankind.

Saint Paul declared that while preaching to others, he feared lest he himself might become a transgressor — "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway" (1 Corinth 9:27). If the great Apostle, who saw Christ face to face, did not consider himself to be outside the range of sin, we should not be amazed that in the world-wide Catholic Church there have been, and are those who are unworthy of their sacred calling.

All this has been said in order to make it clear that Christ, Who guaranteed His Church against false doctrine, did not, guarantee her members — neither cleric nor lay — against evil conduct. A judge of the Supreme Court may be a most excellent interpreter and expounder of the Constitution, even though his moral conduct be not in keeping with his judicial status. The Church of Christ although composed of sinful men, is nevertheless, because of the divine guarantee of her Founder, safeguarded against error in proclaiming to the world the truths of Revelation.

Even if Scripture did not explicitly state that the Church of Christ would never err in doctrine, it would nevertheless be evident from the nature of the Church that she should be immune from error in transmitting the doctrine of her Founder. This will be clearly seen if we consider why Christ founded a Church. Christ, as we know, is God. He became man for two main purposes: (1) to atone for sin and, (2) to be our Leader and Model. He atoned for sin once for all on Calvary. But by His life and teaching, He became the Leader and Model not only for those of His own generation, but for all mankind to the end of time.

But how were His life and teaching to be transmitted down the ages, from generation to generation, until the end of the world?

Christ did not write a book, nor did He leave His message to mankind carved on stone or metal or written across the sky. Yet His deeds and doctrine were not merely for the people of His day. He might have devised any of many ways for the perpetuation of His ministry to mankind. But it is not a question of what He might have done but of what He has done. He established a Church — that is, a corporate body of men, especially formed by Himself — to continue what He had inaugurated. Particularly note that His purpose in establishing His Church was to transmit His heavenly teaching to succeeding ages. His Church was to speak for Him to the generations which were to follow His departure from this world.

Since, therefore, the office of Christ's Church was to represent Him on earth, it is clear that if He wanted future generations to know His doctrine as He delivered it, He must see to it in some way that she truly speaks for Him. Hence Christ declared that by special divine assistance, His Church would be preserved from error in teaching mankind the truths He had revealed to her. Far from being surprised at this, we should rather be surprised if Christ had not done it. If He thought enough of His doctrine to reveal it, He certainly thought enough of it to preserve it intact for those for whom it was intended. If His truths were so necessary to mankind that He declared that on them depended man's eternal welfare, it certainly behooved Him to see to it that these truths reached mankind to the end of the World, exactly as He had revealed them. The means Christ chose for this was the institution of His Church, as we see from the plain language of Scripture. After Peter had solemnly affirmed his faith in Christ as the Son of the living God, Jesus said to him: "You are Peter (a rock); and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). This was the promise Christ proclaimed that He was to found a Church and that the gates of Hell — that is, Satan or error — should never have place in it.

Christ also stated how the Church was to be safeguarded against error: "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of Truth" (John 14:16). It was humanly impossible for a teaching body not to err. Hence Christ proclaimed that the Spirit of Truth — the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost — should abide in His Church, and preserve His truth intact. Having assured His Apostles of divine assistance in their ministry of proclaiming His doctrine, Christ solemnly commissioned them to go forth as His representatives:

"All Power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, all of you, teach all nations; baptising 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: and behold I am with you all day, even to the consummation of the world" (Matthew 26:18-20).

Christ made the Apostles His ambassadors, endowing them with power from on high with regard to their office of preserving and teaching the Faith. "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive, all of you, the Holy Ghost" (John 20:21-22). Christ thus conferred on His Apostles the Holy Spirit of Truth Whom He had previously promised them. Thus fortified by divine assistance He made them His ambassadors. This He had particularly emphasised when He said: "Go: I send you... He that hears you, hears Me" (Luke 10:3-16). It was in view of the fact that God made His Church His representative on earth that Saint Paul spoke of her as "The House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). It was because the Church was the pillar and ground of

the truth that, Saint Paul said: "Though an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema," (Galatians 1:8). Strong words these from the great Apostle. But he states why he is so positive: "The gospel preached by me is not according to man, for neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it; but by the revelation of God." (Galatians 1:11-22). It is because Saint Paul speaks in the name of God and with God's assurance of the Spirit of Truth abiding in him that he declared that the ministers of the Church are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinth 5:20).

It is certain that Christ will not permit His ambassadors to falsify Him nor His doctrine. For this reason, Catholics regard the Church as they do Christ Himself. And they do so on His word: "He that hears you, hears me" (Luke 10:16). This being so, the attitude of Catholics to the Church is that of Saint Paul to Christ as Paul expressed it when he said: "Lord, what wilt You have me do?" (Acts 9:6). We have God's authority for hearing the Church as His voice. This is why those of Christ's own Church, have that certainty of belief and that joyousness in worship and that firmness in times of trial which evoke the admiration of the world.

When one says: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church" two things are included in this act of faith (1) belief; and, (2) the Holy Catholic Church. We must state what is meant by belief, and what is meant by the Holy Catholic Church. By belief is not meant opinion, nor conjecture, nor view, nor strong persuasion, but absolute conviction. This belief is of such a nature that it admits of no doubt whatsoever, It is as firm as mathematical certainty, and is based on the veracity of God Who has revealed the doctrine of the Catholic Church. This firm conviction does not imply that what is believed is comprehended any more than the physicist comprehends what the force of gravity is. This belief is so firm, that, if need be, believers will die for their conviction. Ten thousand difficulties do not make a doubt. Belief is consistent with a million difficulties but not with a single doubt. The astronomer has countless difficulties regarding the firmament — but not a doubt about it as being in motion. Scientists have innumerable difficulties with regard to the nature of electricity — but not a doubt about its reality. Faith may present innumerable difficulties — but it does not admit of a single doubt. He who doubts in matters of Faith has never had real Faith or else has lost it. Faith and doubt are incompatible — just as incompatible as God and error, or, as light and darkness. Catholic belief is based on the veracity of God Himself. That is why it never wavers.

If belief presented no difficulties, there would be little merit in Faith. There is little or no credit in believing what is evident. Faith is a virtue. Virtue which is not tested in some way can hardly be termed virtue. The virtue of courage is tested by danger; honesty, by temptation to steal; truthfulness, by the inducement to lie; and so on. Many people appear to be virtuous until some occasion reveals their real character. Temptation does not make the thief but reveals him. Danger does not make the coward but declares him. And so of every virtue — the proof of it is in its capacity to stand the test. Truth, chastity, justice, and every virtue must rise to the occasion, and be superior to temptation. That is why virtue is so highly esteemed. It is proof that it has stood the test.

Faith also has its test. God reveals what is above our comprehension. He wants us to believe on His word. Belief often implies the acceptance of what, is beyond our understanding. But, nevertheless, we bow down our judgment, sacrificing it on the altar of God's veracity, and thus paying Him the tribute of intellectual submission. That is what makes Faith valuable in God's sight. It is sacrifice of our noblest faculty — our judgment.

The tendency to self-opinion is proverbial. Ordinarily, the last thing a man will renounce is his own opinion. Some persons hold to their own judgment in spite of every valid argument to the contrary. Now to relinquish one's own judgment on the sole word of another is a great compliment to the character of that other. That is what makes Faith so meritorious. It is the relinquishing of what is dearest to man. This does not mean that Faith is blind or unreasonable. Without understanding his diagnosis, we submit to the judgment of a physician whom we trust. Without understanding how he performs the operation, we place our lives in the hands of a surgeon in whom we have confidence. We entrust our safety to the engineer of the train which we board, not because we understand engineering, but because we have faith in the engineer. And so we submit our judgment to the word of God because we know He can neither deceive nor be deceived. That is good logic. That is no surrender of reason, but a right use of it. Of course, the whole matter reduces itself to this: Has God spoken? Christ is God. Christ has spoken. Therefore, our belief in His preaching is rational and absolutely firm. Hence, Catholic belief is fixed because truth is fixed. Catholics do not have to worry about doctrine. Everything essential has been settled once for all by Him Who is the Way, the Truth and the Light of the world. So much for belief.

Let us now consider the Church. When it is said that, we believe in the Holy Catholic Church, we mean by the Church that organisation instituted by Christ for continuing and extending the work which He began. Christ did not write a book, nor did He carve his teaching on stone. Neither did He leave it to chance to reach future generations. He established a society called the Holy Catholic Church, and left with this society not only His teaching, but also His guarantee that His teaching would be divinely safeguarded from error. Unless Christ's own Church had divine guidance and support, it had perished before it had fairly begun. Tradition states that Saint Peter, on his way to preach the religion of Christ to the citizens of Rome, was met by a pagan philosopher. The following dialogue ensued:

"Whither are you bound, Galilean?"

"To Rome."

"What would you in Rome?"

"To teach Christ crucified"

"His doctrine is?"

"That the soul is of more value than the whole world."

"But the Romans love wealth. What else?"

"Self-denial and humility."

"The Romans are proud and honour pride. What else?"

"Renunciation of Worldly Pleasure."

"Go back; you have come to the wrong people: for the Romans are addicted to wealth, and pleasure and enjoyment."

What chance had the Church of Christ against such odds unless God was with her? But because God was with her, she triumphed over every obstacle, making pagan Rome the heart of Christendom, and supplanting the Roman Eagles by the Cross.

The Church is not something in the air — something intangible; but a real organisation of Christ's own founding. Christ established His Church to preach His doctrine and to administer His sacraments. Such a mission requires human beings and material means. The Church is spiritual in the sense that she employs spiritual motives, and gives spiritual aids, and aims at spiritual welfare. But she is visible and material, also, inasmuch as she is composed of human ministers and employs material agencies. A Church that preaches and administers sacraments must have men to preach and to administer the sacred rites. The doctrine of Christ, and the mode of administering His sacraments were left, not in a book, but with a living organisation. It was this organization — which Christ called His Church — that He sent forth into the world to preach His religion and to give His sacramental help for its practice. If Christ's teaching was to be kept intact, somebody had to keep it; somebody had to pass it on unerringly by word or writing.

Those, therefore, who say that Christ established a religion but not a visible Church, are like unto those who would affirm that an eloquent discourse was delivered without a speaker. The invisible Church idea was invented in an effort to save Protestantism; for it was clear that no visible Church of Christ would be so contradictory in doctrine and practice as were the various Evangelical denominations. So they devised the theory that the religion of Christ was the spirit of Christ manifesting itself variously in various denominations.

Saint Paul, however, has said that even if an angel from heaven should preach a different doctrine from what the Church delivered, the angel should not be heard, but should be anathematised. When, therefore, the Apostles' Creed states, "I believe in... the Holy Catholic Church," the meaning is that we believe in her as if we beheld Christ Himself in person addressing us.

In putting this trust in the Church, we are simply doing what Christ has enjoined upon us. He said of His representatives: "He that hears you, hears Me" (Luke 10:16). The resurrected Christ, in speaking to his Church as his representative, said: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). If He Who said these words were not God, then there is no divine Church at all, and there is no use belonging to any Church. But Christ is God; He established a Church; that Church is the Holy Catholic Church — Christ's own Church; and we believe in her as we do in God Himself.

Some denominations recite the Apostle's Creed regularly at their services. They repeat Sunday after Sunday — "I believe in... the Holy Catholic Church." Nevertheless, they do not believe in the Holy Catholic Church.

Catholic is from the Greek word meaning universal. It was applied to the Church of Christ because this Church was not confined to any part of the world, nor to any race or nation, nor identified with any government or class of people, but, existed in every part of the world, and embraced every race and nation, and functioned under every form of government. Yet, although this Church has always been universal, it forms one corporate body, as closely united as if it existed in one place only, notwithstanding the fact that it exists everywhere. The Catholic Church is the only corporate religious body in the world which is not national, racial nor local. By corporate body is meant a society whose members are united in one organisation, just as the members of the human body are, united to form one person.

The Catholic Church is not only universal in the sense that she exists in every part of the world, as one body under one administrative head, but also in the sense, that her teaching is everywhere and always the same. We know how difficult, or rather impossible it is for a local society of any kind to

hold together for a long period, and to preserve unity among its members. It is much more difficult for a state or national government to preserve, for long, unity of belief and government.

Christ said of His Church: "I am with you all days" (Matthew 28:20). This explains the universal and perpetual existence of the Catholic Church; and also accounts for the fact that her teaching has always been the truth of God, and therefore always the same, since truth never changes.

The Catholic Church is the only corporate religious society which goes back to Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity. The Church founded by Christ was a corporate society with Peter its first head: "You are Peter [a rock]; and on this rock I will build My Church, and the, gates of hell shall not prevail against it," (Matthew 16:18). It is either the Catholic Church, therefore, or the rejection of Christ and His Church altogether, if one wants to be logical and consistent.

PART II.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: THE PRINCIPLE AND SOURCES OF ITS INDEFECTIBLE LIFE.

(Sermon preached by Most Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer at consecration of Most Rev. B. Hackett, late Bishop of Waterford, March 19, 1916.)

"And I say to you: that you are Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Mathew 16:18)

Five months ago, we assembled in this Cathedral to offer to God our prayers and the suffrages of the Church for the repose of the soul of the great Bishop who had just passed away. We desired also to pay a tribute of respect to his memory, and no one who was present on that occasion will forget the manifestation of reverential sorrow in the midst of which the remains of Dr. Sheehan were borne to the grave. It was worthy of this fine old Catholic City of Waterford and showed how quick its people are to recognise and to honour the worth of a bishop who devoted his high abilities without stint to the duties of his sacred office.

Today the period of our mourning is over, and God, through his Vicar on earth, has sent you a child of your own diocese to fill the vacant chair of Waterford, to take in his hand the crozier of Saint Carthage and to lead the flock committed to his care into the way of salvation.

No episcopate could begin under happier omens. We all know your young Bishop, and to know him is to love and to respect him. Years ago, he turned away from all the attractions which even in the Church might move a young priest's ambition. He severed all the ties that bind one to home and friends and gave himself to the service of God and the work of the missions amongst the devoted sons of Saint Alphonsus Liguori. He had little thought of becoming Bishop of Waterford. But God can work out the designs of His providence in other than human ways; and now the Holy See, with its own, unfailing prudence, having received from the clergy of the diocese the names of three ecclesiastics whom they deemed worthy of the bishopric, and submitted these names for a special report to the Bishops of the Province of Cashel, has made its choice and given you Dr. Hackett for your Bishop. We all hope and pray that the episcopate which is now begun may be blessed by God, and prolonged for many years, and be fruitful in blessings for the clergy and people of the diocese; and when your Bishop's turn comes to render an account of his stewardship, he may appear before the great Bishop and Shepherd of all souls with his hands full of merit for work well done for the Church of God. And it is in its relation to the universal Church that the sacred function in which we are engaged has its sanctity and its importance.

We are not merely filling a local vacancy, appointing a distinguished man to a high office, but the solemn function of today is instinct with the life of the whole Catholic Church. The spirit of God Who sustains and directs her has descended on your Bishop in the fullness of the Sacrament of Orders; he is constituted ruler, teacher, shepherd of this portion of the flock of Christ and his authority has behind it, and in it, the full power and sanction of the Catholic Church. He does not take the honour to himself; he is sent; he comes to you bearing in his hands the commission of the Vicar of Christ: fulfilling God's word: - "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they be sent?"

That is the great strength of our position as Catholics. We are not isolated communities but we all live by the one divine life of the Church herself. Individuals pass away; bishops and priests do their work for their allotted span of life, but the Catholic Church can never fail. And in that, We, the Church, are not isolated communities. We are raised above the vicissitudes of life although the Church is composed of mortal men and carries on her mission in the conditions of human society. She, the bride of Christ, is of this world, and will last to the end of time.

If then you will bear with me for a little while, I shall say something about the indefectibility, the unfailing life of the Catholic Church, and the means which her Divine Founder has provided for its maintenance. I suppose no one will question the fact that, as an organisation, the Catholic Church at the present moment is the greatest society of men that exists in the world. There is nothing to come near her, nothing to compare with her. Whether you regard the number of her members, the astonishing unity by which they are held together, the absolute oneness and unquestioned authority of her government, the perfection of her discipline; in everything that goes to give cohesion and strength to a human society, there is no institution, secular or religious, that can approach in grandeur, in all the elements of real greatness to our glorious Catholic Church. She is spread over the world; she transcends all the limitations of time or race or language that mark the fundamental distinctions between peoples. She does not weaken the characteristics of their several nationalities, but by her mysterious power, raises them all to a higher level, in which they find a nobler unity. One life pervades them all and holds them in its extraordinary vitality.

Thus, we see then, that the spiritual energy with which the Church is discharging her universal mission is truly marvellous. Her Clergy, in every quarter of the globe, are proclaiming the truths of the Gospel, and administering the sacraments, and working with an unflagging zeal. All her agencies are for the sanctification of the people. She is continually enlarging her boundaries and gathering new peoples into her fold. In the world and not of the world, she holds herself the debtor of rich and poor alike, and discharges, at all costs, and against all opposition, the divine trust which has been committed to her. To look at her as she is today, without taking into account the unseen forces which we know she wields, but merely as she appears to the world, you would say that she was a young society, strong and vigorous with all the fresh energy of youth, and was setting out in hope and courage on her career. You see no traces of age upon her; she shows no sign of lassitude; her heart is as strong and her courage as high as if it were yesterday she received the divine commission: "Go, teach all nations."

Yet think what a history she has behind her. Nineteen hundred years of labour and suffering and strife such as never fell to the lot of any institution. The hatred of the world, which the Lord Himself predicted, has followed her down the ages, and to this day has never relented. When her foundations were laid, and for hundreds of years afterwards, not a single kingdom of modern Europe was in existence. She came into being while the mighty Roman Empire was in the heyday

of its power, and her first experience was to feel for three hundred years the heavy hand of its merciless persecution. Attempts have been made by infidel writers to extenuate the deeds of that Pagan Government, but the evidence is overwhelming of the inhuman cruelty with which the Christians were hunted down. The scenes in Rome itself, that make one's blood creep, were the standard for the provinces. It was the sport of emperors and their courts and the populace to sit in the amphitheatre and see the Christians torn to pieces by wild beasts, in the arena.

That was the death by which the venerable Saint Ignatius (Bishop of Antioch) won his crown, praying that the lions might grind him between their teeth and make him the fine flour of Christ. So, too, in Rome, poor little Saint Agnes, a child of thirteen years, gave up her life proclaiming herself the spouse of Him Whom the angels adored. Old and young alike were struck down, but in vain. Christians sprang up in numbers as if from the ground, and the great saying of Tertullian was verified "that the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians." And all the time, these Christians never turned on their oppressors, but prayed for them, and their revenge was to draw them into the knowledge and service of their Master. It was an astounding victory, the full splendour of which shone out when the Emperor Constantine, the ruler of the world, gave peace to the Church, and himself sought from Celestine, Bishop of Rome, admission to the fold.

Later again the unconquerable strength of the Church of God was seen in her struggle for centuries with the barbarians. One after another, these wild races in their millions swarmed over Europe, and swept everything before their irresistible onset. They were like the locusts, innumerable, and their progress was marked by universal ruin. They broke the resistance of the representatives of the decaying Empire of Rome, and conquered their way through Germany and Belgium and France and far into Spain and Italy; and civilisation itself seemed in danger of perishing. There was no physical force capable of withstanding the wild rush of these invaders. But what the legions of Rome could not do, the Gospel of Christ in the hands of His Church did triumphantly: she subdued them, and civilised them, and taught these wild children of nature to know the Child of Mary, and to consecrate their wild energies to the service of the Crucified. It is all most wonderful, almost like a fairy tale, — the story of the triumph of the truth of God. The Church of Christ, weak and powerless in the weapons of this world, withstood these barbarian hordes and issued from the contest, fresher, and stronger than ever, and led them, in her triumphant progress, the captives of her Lord.

But physical violence, bad as it has often been, is the least of the dangers that beset the Church. It, touches her only on the outside, but cannot reach the vital principle. It is so ordinarily with human societies. Disintegration comes from within; they go to pieces when the bond of union is weakened, and dissensions rise amongst their members. So the supreme trial of the Church has been to overcome the forces of disruption which her own children set in motion. Heresy has been her worst enemy; it attacks the very principle of her life, which is the faith of God. And all through the centuries, she has had to put forth all strength to guard that sacred deposit. She has had to deal with errors against faith which, in the subtlety with which they were urged, the learning and authority of their authors, the support which they receive from secular powers, would have broken up and destroyed any merely human organisation.

We have but an imperfect idea of the strength of some of the early heresies. The Arians at one time by deceit, by intrigue with the civil power, seemed to have defeated the Church, so that Saint Jerome in sadness complained: "The whole world groaned at finding itself Arian." So, too, the powerful body of the Nestorians, led by the patriarch of Constantinople, and supported by numbers of bishops, swept over Asia Minor, and, for the time, seemed irresistible. Other heresies, not less

formidable, sprang up at intervals with much vigour and spread rapidly; but in the end, the Church survived them all. By a divine instinct, she detected their errors, and inexorably rejected them, and resumed her own way, more healthy and vigorous for cutting off these dead branches.

Nearer to our own time, and with disastrous consequences which are felt at this very moment, was the attack which began in Germany in the sixteenth century against the faith of the Church. Luther and Calvin led the revolt, and were only too successful in their evil enterprise. Kingdom after kingdom fell away, until people began to discuss the question how far the defections might go consistently with the Church's Catholicity. But here again the promises of Christ were fulfilled, and the divine life of His Spouse asserted itself. By her own innate health, the Church threw off the false doctrines as a foreign body, and drove out of the fold those who would lay profane hands upon the Ark of God. It was a great and solemn crisis; strong powers of evil combined against the Church of God; the restless and rebellious minds of men, the ambition and corruption of temporal rulers, the impatience of human passions under the restraint of the Gospel, made a combination that was almost overwhelming in its strength, but again, as always, the Church emerged from the trial as if she renewed her life in the very dangers of the contest. The loss of so many members was deplorable, but the faith should be saved at any cost. And see the result. For the last three hundred years the Church has gone on from victory to victory, displaying in every quarter of the world a fuller and more beneficent energy; multiplying her religious communities, and all her other spiritual agencies, fulfilling her great mission with an even more ample and striking success.

What is the explanation of this unfailing vitality, which runs counter to all the laws of human institutions, that cannot be destroyed by violence, nor betrayed by deceit: that even time itself, to which everything in this world succumbs, cannot wear out or weaken? After nineteen hundred years, during which, in one form or another, the Church has been in conflict with the world, and pursued with an unflagging hatred, how is it that she is today fresh with the beauty and the young vigour in which she came from her Founder's hands, standing four square against all the forces of evil, the one solid structure in a world of change? You know the answer: she is the work of God who has given to her in the supreme ruler whom He has placed in His own stead, the principle of her cohesion and her stability. "And I say to you," said Christ, "that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." That is the pledge of the Church's endurance, and against it, the powers of evil have beaten in vain. The tremendous strength of the Roman Empire, the wild hordes of the barbarians, the deceits of error, the corruption of the world, and time itself, have never prevailed against her because she was built upon the rock. "And the rains fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

And all through the history of the Church, you see the working of that divine dispensation. The See of Peter has withstood all trials, and has sustained the whole Church. Other Sees, at one time bright glories of the Catholic Church, have fallen away and been lost. Rome stands unshaken in her unfailing strength. Alexandria, with which forever is associated the splendour of the dauntless Saint Athanasius, "Athanasius contra mundum": "Athanasius, against the world"; Antioch, the great school of Christian learning; Constantinople, which rang with the golden eloquence of Saint Chrysostom: the great churches of Africa, where Saint Cyprian of Carthage, and the mighty Saint Augustine taught, have disappeared long ago, but the mother of them all, the living centre on which the forces that have borne them down, have beaten with a concentrated fury, has preserved her immortal life.

In one unbroken succession, the line of Roman Pontiffs goes back from Benedict XV, our current pontiff, to Peter, and is itself the witness to the Divine Power that has maintained it. There is no need to retell the story of the Popes during the persecutions in which the Pagan Empire of Rome put forth its strength to crush the religion of the Galilean. One after another, they won the martyr's crown; when one fell, another took his place. With superhuman intrepidity, they entered on the duties of their sacred office, celebrated Holy Mass on the tombs of their predecessors, confirmed and encouraged the survivors of the persecution, and when their own turn came, stepped with a light heart from the Papal Throne to the scaffold, rejoicing because they were deemed worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.

And through all the ages, since these great days, the Popes have led the Church in dangers and given her strength against all attacks. At times, you see great potentates who can bend their fellowmen to their will, powerless in presence of some old man who sits in the Chair of Peter. In defence of the rights of the Church, Saint Gregory VII, the great Hildebrand, brought the Emperor Henry IV on his knees to Canossa, just as in our times his successor, Leo XIII., led the German Catholics to victory against Bismarck, "the man of blood and iron," and established them in the position of independence which they hold today. So, too, [Saint] Pius X. confirmed his brethren, the Bishops of France, and inspired them with the spirit of sacrifice which surrendered to an infidel and persecuting government the whole material wealth of their Church rather than compromise his and the Church's spiritual liberty.

But in nothing does the glory of the Roman Pontiffs stand out more luminously than in their fidelity as guardians of the faith and teachers of the Church. The doctrine of Rome has been the standard of the faith. Who held her was within the fold: who separated from her cut themselves off from the Church of God. It was the manifest fulfilment of the word in which our Lord Himself guaranteed the unfailing faith of the Head of His Church. And the Lord said: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you all, that He might sift you all as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). (The old English 'thee' emphasizes how it was to Peter himself that this commission was given.)

Far away back in the fourth and fifth centuries of our era, it is most impressive to see that prayer of Christ realising itself in the great part which the Bishops of Rome took in the preservation of the faith. In all the great councils they presided through their legates; they propounded the doctrine of the Church as it had come down from Peter and Paul in the living tradition of Rome. And that place of authority was given to them, not as a mere courtesy or mark of inalienable right. In the Council of Ephesus this doctrine of the Primacy of jurisdiction of the Bishops of Rome was proclaimed in words of great force and solemnity by one of the Papal Legates: "It has been known at all times that the holy and most blessed Peter, the Prince and Head of the Apostles, the Pillar of the Faith, the foundation stone of the Catholic Church, received from Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and the Redeemer of the human race, the keys of the kingdom, and the power of binding and loosing from sin was given to him, and he, down to the present day, lives in his successors."

That is our faith without the change of a word. That is the reason of the love and reverence with which we look to Rome. Peter lives in his successors, and his divine commission is the sanction of their authority. You see an instance of it in the strong action by which Pope Pius X saved the Church from the dangers of modernism. In this country of Ireland, we have known little of that pernicious heresy or, as the Pope styled it, collection of heresies. On the continent of Europe, it was spreading and undermining the very foundations of the faith. In one great encyclical letter, the Pope went to

the heart of the issues involved and demonstrated the fatal opposition of the new errors to the doctrine of the Church. In its splendid exposition of Catholic faith, the encyclical "Pascendi" reminds one of the tome of Saint Leo which was read in the Council of Chalcedon. There the Bishops, in their exultation, cried aloud: "Peter has spoken through the voice of Leo." We may say the same; Peter has spoken through the voice of Pius as he will speak to the end of time through his successors in the See of Rome.

These supernatural powers make the Catholic Church always something of a wonder and a mystery to the unbelieving world. In her history she has withstood so many enemies, has come triumphantly out of so many dangers, that, humanly speaking, seemed hopeless, that they look upon her with a certain amount of awe which easily passes into distrust, and hostility. Anyway, she is the only Church which they ever think it worth while to persecute. But those who read human history in the spirit of faith, see in the Catholic Church much more than a wonder of the world. As they follow her in her unbroken greatness from age to age, they say: "The finger of God is here." There is something more than human in this institution. Popes and bishops and the other members of the Catholic Church, after all, are only men. Where do they get the superhuman power that nothing can defeat? But for us who can look at our Holy Church from within, and know the sacred forces that animate her, there is more to be seen than the perfection of her immense organisation. She is like a noble tree firmly rooted, standing in the grandeur of its symmetry and clothed in the rich beauty of its foliage while the whole of that array is but the expression of the vital force that sends its influence from the root to the uppermost branch. It is so with our Holy Church. She is great and beautiful to look at, but she is divine in the spiritual life which she sends through her members.

That is the real wonder of her indefectibility. She has lasted throughout all the ages, not by a mere passive existence, but with a teeming life of holiness which has made her today, after all the long centuries of her career, the same living body that she has been from the first. In each diocese the threads of discipline are gathered into the hands of the bishop, and through him run up to the universal centre, the Seat of the Fisherman, and under it all there is circulating, as the sap in a tree, as the blood in our bodies, the full flow of God's holy grace.

Never, I believe, since the Apostles times, did the people lead holier lives. There are exceptions: there will always be. But in the vast, majority of the members of the Church there is a great holiness, a sense of the supernatural, an apprehension of the unseen, a grasp of the things to be hoped for, that God alone could produce in a world like this. "I have come," said Christ, that they may have life and have it more abundantly," and that blessed word is being realised this moment in millions upon millions of humble souls who are leading the true life of faith. Many causes have been at work to produce these results. The sources of Grace by which God has surrounded us in His Church are countless, and for every one of them we have to bless and thank Him; but, I think we may attribute to two devotions which in our time have received a great extension and intensification, much of the spiritual fervour which is now seen amongst us: the worship of Our Divine Lord Himself in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist and then the filial piety of the whole Church towards our Blessed Mother Mary.

I mention these two devotions, first, because of their intrinsic sanctity and spirituality, and then as illustrating in a striking way the living power of the authority which God has, established for the maintenance of his Church

There is no need to tell you who have been our leaders and teachers in this higher way. Pius X will live for ever in the grateful memory of the faithful for all that he has done for the worship of our Divine Lord in the sacrament of His Love. By one magisterial stroke of his pen he swept away the barriers which a mistaken reverence had raised between the people and their Lord, and opened up broadly, with the large charity of the Sacred Heart Itself, for all of us — the old in our needs, the young in their innocence, — the approach to the Living Bread which came down from Heaven.

In the same spirit of adoration for the presence of our God, did Pius X. also encourage and bless our great Eucharistic Congresses, which have astonished the world by their magnificence and their demonstration of the power of our Catholic faith. It has been the same from the beginning. Since the Church received this greatest of her treasures, the centre of our religion, out of the hand of Christ Himself on the night before He suffered, she has guarded it as the Living Bread for the sanctification of her children. The Holy Mass itself, with its prayers, and ceremonies, comes down to us from the earliest times as the grand and solemn liturgy in which the Popes have enshrined the Holy Sacrifice. And today, as ever, they gather the people around the altar to offer to God the tribute of their adoration and thanks, and to receive Him, under a sacramental form, as the food of their souls.

So it was another Pius, the saintly Pius IX, [now beatified] who added the latest gem to the crown of Our Lady by the definition of her Immaculate Conception; and since that event everyone sees that the devotion of the faithful to the Mother of God has grown in depth and tenderness and in its influence on their lives. In this also, the Pope was like the householder who produces from his store things old and new. Our Mother Mary has ever lived in the hearts of the faithful as a holy and purifying influence. In the catacombs in Rome there is a beautiful painting which goes back probably to the first century of our era; it represents the Virgin Mother with the Divine Child in her arms, such as you may see it any day in our churches, and it tells us more eloquently than words that the divine motherhood touched the hearts and imaginations of the first Christians with the same feelings that we experience now. And the lovely invocation that we say each day, "Holy Mary, Mother of God," comes down to us for fifteen hundred years from the Council of Ephesus as the cry of joy that went up from the hearts of the people when the Bishops, under the presidency of Saint Cyril, the representative of the pope, defined as the doctrine of the Church that in Christ our Lord there was but one Person, the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, and that Mary was His Mother.

It is fully in the spirit of that tradition that the Popes in Our time have turned the minds of the faithful, in all the trials of the Church, to the intercession of the Virgin Mary. Through her prayers, and by the blessing of her Divine Son in the Holy Eucharist, they have deepened the faith of the people, quickened their piety, sanctified their lives, and thus reinvigorated the spiritual life which, as the soul in the body, is the force that gives the Church her cohesion and her strength.

Between the two Piuses came the great Leo XIII, whose name must not be omitted when we speak of those who strengthened the Church of God. In the elevation of his intellect, his sure grasp of principle, his instinctive sense of the needs of his time, Leo XIII stands out in the long line of Popes like one of the Fathers of the Church. He confirmed his brethren. In his grand encyclical letters he dealt with every phase of the spiritual life, sent the Catholic schools back to the true sources of philosophy; dedicated the homes of the people to the Holy Family; taught governments and their subjects, employers and employed, rich and poor, their mutual rights and obligations; and the sound of these pronouncements was heard with respect outside the limits of our Holy Church.

Who on earth can speak with the power of these Popes? Who like them can shape the views and opinions and move the hearts of hundreds of millions of people by their words? They are the true teachers of the world; for them, in Peter, Christ's prayer has been heard; their faith fails not, and they in turn confirm their brethren. And at the present hour, [1916] when, in the terrible war that is raging, men slaughter one another, and hate one another with a savagery that is revolting in professing Christians, one figure, that of the Pope, rises in the midst of the storm, like Christ upon the waters, and pleads for peace, appealing to them all for the sake of the Master Whom they profess to follow, to remember that they are brothers, the children of their Father Who is in Heaven. Ah! Well it would be for the world if they would heed that word of the Vicar of Christ; well would it be if the warring nations had not broken away from the unity of the faith, and in their religion, had a common ground on which to meet and here, again, we see, almost in a dramatic way, the power of Rome's attraction. Around the throne of Benedict XV, there gathered a few weeks ago a number of Cardinals, amongst whom were Cardinal Mercier, the Patriot Primate of Belgium; Cardinal von Hartmann, of Germany; Cardinal Bourne of England; and Cardinal Bérthoulet of France. Each of them, I dare say, is as enthusiastic for the cause of his own country as any soldier in the trenches, but all of them are drawn together in the higher and holier union which binds them to the Chair of Peter.

Your Bishop, who is consecrated today, is the evidence and the symbol of your place in that union with Rome. He is sent to you as the pledge of the solicitude of our Holy Father the Pope for the members of his flock in this diocese, and I have no doubt that through his administration the ties of love and reverence and filial obedience that have bound you all, as they bind all Catholics in Ireland to the Chair of Peter, will be drawn, if possible more closely and firmly than ever. For Dr. Hackett himself I fear that it is a change which he must contemplate with anxiety. It is no small sacrifice to exchange the peace and the happiness and security of his life in religion for the cares and responsibilities of the Bishop's office. But it is not his own choice. The burden has been laid upon him by the Vicar of Christ, and he need have no fear but that in accepting it in obedience to that call he will receive grace and strength to bear it worthily.

In passing from his convent to the Episcopal chair, Dr. Hackett is following the footsteps of the great and illustrious founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Saint Alphonsus Liguori, in spite of his earnest appeals, was made Bishop of Saint Agatha of the Goths, and in that position lived a life of extraordinary sanctity and apostolic zeal which is one of the glories of the Catholic Church and an inspiration for all bishops. He was a man of the very highest intellect and of great leaning, and has been declared a Doctor of the Church. But amongst the profoundest lessons that he has taught us, and has been the means of impressing on the minds of the faithful, are the devotion of true faith to the Divine Presence in the Adorable Eucharist, and then a triumphant love for the Glories of Mary.

Surely it is not without a special providence that Dr. Hackett has been trained for many years in the school of Saint Alphonsus, and has been breathing among the members of the grand Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer the spirit of their Founder, and has learned and felt in his missionary labours the power of Mary's intercession and the divine greatness of God's gift of love in the Adorable Eucharist. These will now stand him in good stead. Our Blessed Mother will intercede for him, and the glorious Saint Joseph, on whose feast he has the happiness to be consecrated, will join his prayers to those of his spotless spouse and plead for him, his clergy, and his people, that they may be one in heart and soul in the unity of faith and the bond of peace. The prayers of Mary and Joseph and the blessing of the Divine Child will, we hope and pray, rest from this hour on your

Bishop and make him a true shepherd of the flock, expending himself for their sakes, and doing, while he lives, great work in the ministry for the edification of the Body of Christ. Amen.
