

**DECREE OF OCEANIA OF THE BEATIFICATION
OR DECLARATION OF THE MARTYRDOM OF THE
VENERABLE PETER LOUIS MARY CHANEL, PRIEST
OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY, PRO-VICAR APOSTOLIC
OF WESTERN OCEANIA.**

In answer to the question: "Is there evidence of the martyrdom, of the cause of the martyrdom, of the signs or miracles in the matter and to the effect under consideration?"

By a design of the Divine Wisdom it has happened that, as the truth of the Christian Religion was wonderfully strengthened from the beginning by the blood of her countless martyrs, it has, by the same blood, through the several succeeding ages been spread abroad, and thus the followers of Christ have always had glorious models to inflame their loving faith. To this assembly of heroes must be added the Venerable Peter Louis Mary Chanel. Born in the third year of this century, on the twelfth of July, in the village of Cuet, in the Diocese of Belley, by his innocence, his meekness, and his love of religion, he showed from his youth what he was afterwards to be as a defender and propagator of the Catholic Truth. Being called by God he was admitted to Holy Orders, wherein he shone still more by his virtues so as to be employed by his Bishop in the discharge of the highest offices. But God had greater things in store for him when he had joined the Society of Mary, to which the Holy See had entrusted the Missions of Western Oceania and sent him from the shores of France to Futuna, where he landed in 1837. He remained there alone with a lay Brother, whilst his fellow Missioners went to different parts of the islands. He, at first, was well received by the king of the nation, with whom he remained on good terms for the space of two years. As soon as he had mastered the language so as to be able to be understood by him, he earnestly endeavoured to convert him to the Christian Faith. The king, who was also the priest of his tribe, seeing that many through the preaching of Peter Louis had embraced the Christian religion, changed his love into hatred. Wherefore, abandoning the venerable priest, he went to live in another village, and left him destitute of every help, and even of food. Nothing daunted, the evangelical labourer obtained his food by cultivating the land in the sweat of his brow, but the savage enemies of the Christian name robbed him of all he possessed. Their wrath daily increased at the sight of the number of believers he won over by preaching the word of God. Among these converts was the son of the King. A plot was accordingly formed in order to destroy both religion and the venerable priest himself. By order of the King some infuriated satellites were sent to put the servant of God to death. They found him alone at home, struck him most cruelly with their clubs, with spears they hurled him to the ground, and at length laid open his skull with a hatchet which penetrated his very brains. Thus, as a most acceptable victim, was he immolated a sacrifice to God. Thus did the good shepherd joyfully give up his life for his flock on the 28th of April, 1841, a consummation for which he had long yearned. The frightful death of the King and of his brothers, and of some others of the persecutors, which happened soon after, was looked upon by all as a Divine punishment of their crime. Several of the natives, even those who had been the promoters and perpetrators of the crime, embraced the Faith, and became illustrious witnesses of the martyrdom, showing once more that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians. Nor did Heaven fail to give other testimony to the glory of the martyr. The Prefect-Apostolic of Futuna was careful to draw up a report of all these facts. This, and other authentic documents, being sent to Rome by the Vicar-Apostolic of Oceania, Pius IX., of illustrious memory, gave them the place of the ordinary process of enquiry, confirmed the opinion of the Special Congregation of Sacred Rites, appointed by himself, and signed the Commission to introduce the Cause on 24th September, 1857. The Apostolic Deeds having been drawn up and minor questions duly solved, his Holiness Pope Leo XIII. granted that the examination of the martyrdom, the cause of the martyrdom, together with the signs or miracles should take place. Wherefore a disquisition of all these according to the rules of the most scrutinising judgment was drawn up in a Preliminary Congregation, the 11th of the kalends of July of the year 1881, in presence of the late illustrious Cardinal Dominic Bartolini, Prefect of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, who had charge of the Cause. Another preparatory Congregation was held in the usual form, in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican, on the 7th of the kalends of March, 1886. A third general Congregation was held before our Most Holy Father Pope Leo XIII in the Palace of the Vatican, on the 12th of the kalends of September last. In this the Most Eminent Cardinal Angelo Bianchi, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites in charge of the Cause, successor of the late Cardinal Bartolini, of illustrious memory, proposed the following question: *Whether there is evidence of the martyrdom, the cause of the martyrdom, the signs and miracles in the matter and to the effect under consideration.* The most Reverend Cardinals and Father Consultors gave their opinions. These being heard, our Most Holy Lord the Pope deferred his final decision until he had further poured forth supplicant prayers to Almighty God.

On this, the last Sunday after Pentecost, whereon, this year, we honour the memory of the Glorious Virgin and Martyr St. Catherine, the Unbloody Sacrifice having been offered, the Holy Father seated upon his Throne in his Palace of the Vatican, in the presence of the Most Reverend Cardinal Angelo Bianchi, Prefect, who was in charge of the Cause, together with the Reverend Father Augustin Caprea, Promoter of the Faith, and myself the undersigned secretary, decreed that: "There was evidence of the martyrdom of the venerable servant of God, Peter Louis Mary Chanel, and of the cause of the martyrdom which God had made manifest and had confirmed by many signs and miracles." And he ordered this Decree to be published and to be registered in the Acts of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on the 7th of the kalends of December of the year 1888.

I.S.



A. CARDINAL BIANCHI S.R.C. Pref.
LAURENTIUS SALVATI S.R.C. Secretarius.

MARY STUART; A TRUE MARTYR.

(Tablet, December 15.)

FATHER BODERICK GRANT writes to us: As I have been requested by many who are deeply interested in this cause to give wide circulation among Catholics to the last letter of Mary Stuart to Pope Sixtus V., written shortly before her execution, I feel that I cannot do better than embody it in a letter or article which can reach our brethren by means of your able and interesting paper. This last farewell of Mary to the Vicar of Christ, in addition to its intense pathos, is valuable as a theological profession of faith, and I count it a privilege to have been allowed to see the original in the library of the Vatican. Benedict XIV. has truly declared its value to be priceless, and it will, indeed, prove to be such if it be the means of dispelling the false ideas which so many Catholics have imbibed from Protestant historians, who, basing their arguments upon the well-worn forgeries of that day, have proclaimed to the world that Mary Stuart was a scheming murderess, caught in her own toils, and justly executed. The last words of anyone standing on the threshold of the dark valley are supposed to be true words, but when those words are written in the most solemn way to the highest authority on this earth, the Vicar of Christ, they have a stronger claim upon our belief; moreover, they so very clearly indicate the fixed idea in the mind of the Scottish Queen that she was dying for the faith and because the hopes of the Church at that time were centred in her. The great Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles Borromeo, most truly expressed the feelings of the Church throughout Europe when he wrote to the Queen of Scots to comfort and console her in her long captivity, and to tell her that the eyes of all Christendom were upon her to see how she upheld the honour and the cause of the Church. In giving the letter, I have omitted the parts in which she speaks of her hopes for the marriage of her son, James VI., and regarding the pensions of her servants.

JESUS MARIA.

"Holy Father,—Inasmuch as it has pleased God in His divine providence to order in His Church that, under His crucified Son, Jesus Christ, all those who believe in Him and are baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, should recognise as mother one universal Church, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman, whose commands, with the ten of the ancient law, are to be kept under pain of damnation, it is requisite that all who aspire to eternal life should keep their gaze steadfastly fixed thereon, therefore, I, born of royal parents, was like them baptised in it. Nay more, I, unworthy as I am, was from the breast called to the throne, and anointed and crowned by the authority and ministers of that Church, and nourished and reared under her wing and on her bosom, and by her instructed in the obedience owed by all Christians to him whom she, guided by the Holy Ghost, has elected according to the ancient decrees and order of the primitive Church, to the Apostolic Holy See, as our head on earth: to whom Jesus Christ, in his last testament, speaking to St. Peter of the foundation of this Church, gave the power to bind and loose poor sinners from the bonds of Satan, absolving us by him or by his ministers appointed, from all crimes and sins that we commit and perpetrate, we being penitent, and as far as in us lies making satisfaction for them, having confessed according to the ordinance of the Church. I call to witness my Saviour Jesus Christ, the most blessed Trinity, the glorious Virgin Mary, all the angels and arch-angels, St. Peter, the shepherd, my peculiar intercessor, and special advocate, St. Andrew and all the saints, that I have always lived in the faith of the Universal Church, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman, in which being regenerated I have always intended to do my duty to the Apostolic See, but, to my great regret, I have not been able to do this, owing to my detention in this captivity, and my long sickness. But now that it has pleased God, Most Holy Father, to permit for my sins, and those of this unfortunate island, that I, the sole remnant of the blood of England and Scotland, possessing that faith, should, after 20 years' captivity, confined in a strait prison, and at length condemned to death by the states and heretical assembly of this country, as was this day communicated to me by Lord Buckhurst, Amias Paulet my keeper, one Drury, knight, and a secretary named Beale, commanding me in the name of their Queen to prepare to receive death, and offering me one of their bishops and a dean for consolation, the priest whom I had having been taken away and kept I know not where. I have considered it my first duty to turn to God, and then with own hand to write to your Holiness, in order that as I cannot make it known to you before my death, yet afterwards the reason and intent may be manifest to you, which is, the whole being duly considered, the subversion of their religion in this island, designed they say by me, and in my favour attempted, by their own subjects obedient to your laws, by the Catholic princes and my family, who all name me as heir to this crown in their prayers. I leave it to your Holiness to consider the consequence of such a sentence, entreating you to have prayers said for my poor soul, and the souls of all those who are dead or dying, for the same or the like judgment. And my intention being, according to the constitution of the Curia, to confess, do such penance as I can, and receive Viaticum, if I can obtain my chaplain to administer the said sacraments. In default whereof, with a contrite and penitent heart, I prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness, confessing myself to God and His saints, and to your paternity, to be a most unworthy sinner, and guilty of eternal loss, if it do not please the good God, Who died for penitent sinners, to have mercy; entreating you to take this my general submission as a testimony of my intention to accomplish all that is commanded by the Church, and to save my poor soul, between which and the justice of God I interpose the blood of Jesus Christ, crucified for me and for all sinners the worst of whom I confess myself to be." "Nay, more, voluntarily offering at the foot of His cross my blood for my adherence to His Church, and the faithful zeal I feel for it, as without the restoration of it I never desire to live in this wretched world." "Never having had any intention, as my servants present in my affliction will testify, I have willingly offered