

The future and the Present

One day, perhaps, you will arrive at the cross-roads of life.

The paths diverge, one running here, another there.

The time of general preparation is past; that of the particular approaches, and you must know to what station of life you are, ere long, to belong.

Decisive moment! Choice upon which an Eternity depends!

Yes, upon your choice of a state of life, your eternity certainly depends.

Certain obligations are attached to every condition of life, on the performance or non-performance of which is based a favorable or unfavorable sentence after death.

In order to faithfully and meritoriously discharge the duties of my calling, two things are necessary:

1.—A supernatural, and

2.—A natural ability for my vocation.

The supernatural qualification is nothing else than the grace of vocation. It is more than sufficient, it is an abundant help from above which, protecting, guiding, and encouraging, assists and strengthens me in the performance of my special duties, guards me in special dangers and sustain me in difficulties and temptations.

Grace of Vocation.

To this grace of vocation I can only lay claim, if the state I choose is the one intended for me by God. If I force myself into a state for which He did not intend me, I thereby relinquish that special assistance which would have been attached to my rightful vocation.

As to the natural qualification, such is given, on the one side, by the talents and faculties which fit me for a certain state, and on the other, by an encouraging consciousness founded on this conviction: I am in the right place; I am where God placed me; I am doing His holy Will; I can, therefore, count on His help.

Yes. This consciousness can justly be called a sort of natural qualification. If, without asking for light from on high, I have made a hasty choice of a state of life—have entered or pushed myself into relations that are never approved of by God, nor, after due deliberation, even by myself, grief, sorrow, repentance may so darken my mind and heart that the duties of my state suffer considerably, and every useful effort is checked.

If I labor with pleasure within the sphere of my vocation, if I am strengthened by the conviction that I am in the right place; if this thought comforts me, that God is pleased with the direction of my life,—my every action has force and power, and all that I do is fresher, better, more durable, and more fruitful of good results.

You cannot dispense with either the natural or supernatural qualification,—least of all, with the supernatural. "Unless the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it." And how foolish it would be to begin to build a tower without first counting the costs, and calculating whether there is money enough on hand to finish the work.

It is beyond all doubt that many are eternally lost in this or that state, and on

account of this or that state who, in another state, would have been saved. They are not equal to the requirements of the state they have chosen; they do not fulfil their duties; they neglect their obligations and, when called to account by God, they find their damnation.

God's Invitation.

Yes, how many are now in hell who, while on earth were in positions unapproved by God; and how many are now in Heaven who would be in hell if here below they had not chosen the vocation for which God designed them, and to which He invited them?

He who blindly enters into any state of life; he who is guided only by temporal considerations in so important a matter and permits himself to be governed by external circumstances; he who does not regard the Will of God and does not assure himself of the Divine approval in an affair so decisive for the salvation of his soul,—forstalls God's holy prerogatives and frustrates His loving intentions and designs for the salvation of each of His human creatures. He commits an act of injustice to human society.

He who is not called to a certain state of life and who, so to say, enters it forcibly

and against his inclinations, resembles a dislocated limb which pains and injures the whole body," because it is in an improper position.

Such a one causes incalculable damage to himself, because he condemns himself to an unnatural position, in which his faculties and talents either utterly lack development or find at best an imperfect and unfruitful expansion, far removed from that easy and prolific development appointed them by the Creator and Dispenser of all good gifts. Above all, such a one inconsiderately or maliciously risks the highest and most important of all his concerns—his immortal soul.

However youthful levity may regard this choice of a state of life—however indifferently and arbitrarily many youth treat this matter—do you, at least, hold fast to this conviction, that much, very much depends upon your choice of vocation—time, Eternity, Heaven, Hell, joy, torments!

Consider, therefore, with God, whither to direct your steps. The paths of life are not a matter of indifference. Better is counsel before the deed, than difficult healing after haste. Do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent what thou hast done.

—Thoughts and Counsels of Father Von Doss, S.J.

Papal Infallibility

Not only does Papal Infallibility have no reference whatever to the political action of Catholics, but it has a very limited application to their religious beliefs (says the *Boston Pilot*).

Papal Infallibility is a dogma which was promulgated in 1870. Its meaning is best exhibited by the following paragraphs of Cardinal Gibbons' *Faith of Our Fathers* (pp. 118-20):

As the doctrine of Papal Infallibility is strangely misapprehended by our separated brethren, because it is grievously misrepresented by those who profess to be enlightened ministers of the Gospel, I shall begin by stating what Infallibility does not mean, and shall then explain what it really is.

First.—The Infallibility of the Popes does not signify that they are inspired. The Apostles were endowed with the gift of inspiration, and we accept their writings as the revered Word of God. No Catholic, on the contrary, claims that the Pope is inspired or endowed with Divine Revelation properly so called.

Second.—Infallibility does not mean that the Pope is impeccable or specially exempt from liability to sin. The Popes have been, indeed, with few exceptions, men of virtuous lives. Many of them are honored as martyrs. Seventy-nine out of 259 are invoked upon our altars as saints eminent for their holiness.

Third.—Bear in mind, also, that this Divine assistance is guaranteed to the Pope not in his capacity as private teacher, but only in his official capacity, when he judges faith and morals as head of the Church. If a Pope, for instance, like Benedict XIV, were to write a treatise on Canon Law, his book would be as much open to criticism as that of any Doctor of the Church.

Fourth.—Finally, the inerrability of the

Popes, being restricted to questions of faith and morals, does not extend to the natural sciences, such as astronomy or geology, unless where error is presented under the false name of science, and arrays itself against revealed truth. It does not, therefore, concern itself about the nature and motions of the planets. Nor does it regard purely political questions, such as the form of government a nation ought to adopt, or for what candidates we ought to vote.

What, then, is the real doctrine of Infallibility? It simply means that the Pope, as successor of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, by virtue of the promises of Jesus Christ, is preserved from the error of judgment when he promulgates the Church's decision on faith or morals.

The Pope, therefore, be it known, is not the maker of the Divine law; he is only its expounder. He is not the author of Revelation but only its interpreter. All Revelation came from God alone through His inspired ministers, and it was complete in the beginning of the Church. The Holy Father has no more authority than you or I to break one iota of the Scriptures, and he is equally with us the servant of the Divine law.

In a word, the Sovereign Pontiff is to the Church, though in a more eminent degree, what the Chief Justice is to the United States. We have an instrument called the Constitution of the United States, which is the charter of our civil rights and liberties. If a controversy arises between two States regarding a constitutional clause, the question is referred, in the last resort, to the Supreme Court at Washington. The Chief Justice, with his associate Judges, examines into the case; and then pronounces judgment upon it; and this decision is final, irrevocable, and practically infallible.

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