

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

Second Article: First Proof of the Truth of the Catholic Church, the Existence of the Apostolic See.

14. Amid the bodies which profess Christianity, that one which possesses the apostolic succession is the true Church of Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic Church possesses the apostolic succession, therefore she is the true Church.

We have in fact already seen that the Divine Founder established the Apostolic See or the Papacy in His Church, of which it was to be the centre and the basis.

Being, then, the centre and the basis of the true Church, the Papacy is inseparable from it, and must ever be preserved therein; therefore, where we find the Papacy, there is also the true Church.

The Papacy or apostolic succession is preserved in the Roman Church. The Prince of the Apostles went to Rome in the reign of the Emperor Claudius, A.D. 42, established his see there, remained there 25 years, and died under Nero on June 29 of the year 67. In dying, he left the Papal See and the supreme power as a divine inheritance to his successors, SS. Linus, Cletus, Clement, and all the others whose names are known, down to Benedict XV. Rome, and hence the Roman Church, is, then, the depository of the Apostolic See. It is proved by history and loudly proclaimed by monuments and traditions; and, moreover, no sect has ever claimed this incontestable attribute of the Roman Church. She is, then, the true and only Church, established by Jesus Christ; and all sects are but corruptions of the Christian faith, the sacrilegious results of heresy and schism.

15. This argument was proclaimed, from the earliest times, by the formula, which was received as an axiom, "*Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*."—Where Peter is, there is the Church." By Peter is here meant the See of Peter, the successor of Peter, or the Roman Pontiff. Every one can comprehend the truth and the force of these words—they admit of no questioning. It is as if one said, "Where the living trunk is, there the tree also is; where the centre is, there is the circle; where the foundation is found, there is also the edifice; where the throne stands, there exists the empire." Let us then loudly proclaim this light-diffusing sentence, "Where Peter is, there is also the Church"; and let us add that which naturally follows, and which is so consoling to the faithful, "Where the Church is, there is Christ; where Christ is, there is salvation."

Third Article: Second Proof of the Truth of the Catholic Church, her four distinctive Marks.

16. The Roman Catholic Church is the true Church of Jesus Christ, if the Divine Founder imprinted in His work distinctive marks, and if these marks or signs are found united in the one Roman Catholic Church.

The minor of this syllogism affirms a twofold fact: (1) the divine imprinting of these distinctive marks, and (2) the existence of these marks in the Roman Catholic Church. In order to prove this twofold fact, we must consider the four marks one after the other; and, after having defined in what each one consists, show (1) that Jesus Christ really gave it to His Church as a pledge of authenticity; (2) that this pledge is found in the Roman Church. As the marks of the Church must be visible to the world we shall, without much reasoning, see them, in fact, shining by their own light in the true Church.

The four marks of the true Church are her four essential properties, manifesting themselves to the world, unity, holiness, Catholicity, and apostolicity. We make this confession in the Creed which we repeat at Mass, "I believe in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church."

Unity.

17. The unity proper to the Church makes this divinely established society stand out alone on earth, undivided in herself, like an individual person. The Church is one in the sense (1) that there is but one Church founded by Jesus Christ; (2) that this one Church has but one head, one faith, one worship, based on the same Sacraments. The Church, or religious society, differs thus from civil society, which is not one, but manifold, being divided into a number of kingdoms, which are independent of each other.

Jesus Christ has imprinted on His Church this essential distinctive character of unity. He has chosen a single foundation on which to build, not His Churches, but His Church, like an edifice formed of all the faithful, as of so many living stones, composing one whole. The multitude of faithful, according to the desires of Our Saviour, was to be perfectly united in heart and mind, as He shows by this prayer to His Eternal Father: "Holy Father, I pray Thee for all those who believe in Me, that all may

be one, as Thou, My Father, and I are one; that so the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John xvii. 20, 21).

Is this mark of unity found in the Catholic Church? It suffices to cast one's eyes on the divers people who compose it to see that by their union with their pastors they form but one family, wherein reigns the most admirable unity of head, of faith, and of worship.

Holiness.

18. The mark of holiness consists in the great fruitfulness of the Church in producing holy works. Like to a living and fertile tree, she possesses the virtue of constantly producing various fruits of holy teaching, holy works, and miracles.

Holiness, invisible in itself, manifests its presence by three effects: (1) a teaching and doctrine which is ever pure; (2) exalted virtue and good works ever flourishing in at least some of the members of the Church; (3) the miracles which are continually worked within her pale. Jesus Christ has endowed His Church with the inalienable treasure of holiness, and with the perpetual gift of miracles. "He has loved His Church," says the Apostle; and He has "delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having any spot" (Eph. v. 25). "I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (John xv. 5). "Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in Me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do" (John xiv. 12).

Holiness enhanced by miracles is thus inseparable from the Church of Jesus Christ. Now the Catholic Church in her past history, as in her present state, appears surrounded by an aureola of holiness; and we have but to look into the best-authenticated *Lives of the Saints*, the acts of the martyrs, the histories of religious Orders and of charitable institutions, and the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, in order to recognise this her holiness in the same way as we recognise a tree by its fruits.

THE WEAVING.

The moon is weaving in the street
A tanglement for passing feet

That must go always up and down
From the river to the town.

For men walk there who never see
The lovely gestures that a tree

Marks over them when they go by.
There men never see the sky.

Their hearts are heavy and they walk
With timid eyes. They never talk.

And so the moon is making there,
Out of her shining, beautiful hair,

Reflections of the branches so
These tired, awkward men may know

By looking on the ground they love
What excellent beauty moves above.

—HAROLD COOK, in the *Touchstone*.

I tell you to aim at that which all who are saints have had in common with each other, and which we, if we hope to be saved, must have in common with them—faithful performance of the commonplace duties of daily life.—Rev. Joseph Farrell.

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