

Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

OF THE INEFFABLE GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS MAN AND OUR DUTY IN GRATITUDE TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

3. The Height of the Love of God.

Q. 5. What is meant by the *height of the love of God*?

A. By this is understood the inconceivable excellency and sublimity of those supernatural effects of His love, which He bestows upon us in this world by His grace, and has prepared for us in the world to come, in His eternal glory; which are so far superior in value and dignity, to all those goods which He bestows on us in the order of nature, that they will not admit of a comparison with them; and have this further advantage also over them, that whereas Almighty God in giving us all kinds of natural goods, gives us only the use of them, reserving to Himself the full power of taking them from us again when He pleases; He has, on the contrary, bound Himself by His sacred promise, that when once He bestows His supernatural goods on a soul, He will never deprive her of them again in this world, unless by her own fault in the abuse of her free will, she forfeits them and throws them from her, and in the world to come, when in possession of His eternal glory, He will put her under the happy impossibility of ever having it in her power to forfeit it.

Q. 6. Wherein does the sublimity of these supernatural goods consist?

A. It consists in this: that by communicating His Divine grace to our souls, He gives us a new manner of existence—a supernatural being—a spiritual dignity, by which we are exalted from the low condition of our native dust, and servile state, to the sublime and eminent dignity of being really and truly the intimate friends of God, yea, of being His adopted children—partaking, in a most admirable manner, of His Divine nature, and united to Him by the strictest ties of union. St. Peter, speaking of this effect of Divine grace, says, "He has given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). And the wise man says of it, that "it is a vapor of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, and therefore no defiled thing can come near it—that it is the brightness of eternal light . . . and conveyeth itself into holy souls, and maketh friends of God" (Wisd. vii. 25). Hence our blessed Saviour says, "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you" (John xv. 15). Here He not only shows the dignity of being His friends, to which He raises us, but also the intimate manner in which He treats us as His friends, by communicating His heavenly truths to us. But the effects of His love do not stop here. By this participation of Himself, which His grace communicates to our souls, He exalts us to that inconceivable dignity of being His adopted children. "Behold," says the beloved disciple, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). Now what human understanding can frame any idea of this most exalted dignity that we, who are by nature dust and ashes, and of ourselves nothing and vanity, should be so highly honored as to be not only allowed, but even entitled to address ourselves to the great, eternal, incomprehensible Being, before Whom the pillars of heaven tremble, with the confidence and affection of children? "for you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15).

Now this dignity of being sons of God, is not an empty title of honor, which brings no solid advantage to our souls, but it is a dignity which carries along with it a full and perfect right to the greatest of all good—to the only real good—the possession of God Himself, and of His eternal glory in His kingdom; "We are the sons of God," says St. Paul, "and if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). Heirs of that eternal kingdom, in which God Himself is our reward exceeding great! Heirs of that happiness which so far exceeds everything in this world, that it cannot enter into the heart of man to form any conception of it! A

happiness the possession of which can never be taken from us, and which will never cloy! a kingdom that will never end, where "we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord" (1 Cor. iii. 18); and where "we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). So that what David says shall then justly be applied to us, "I have said, You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High" (Ps. lxxxi. 6); but what human mind, yea, what angelical understanding, is capable of forming any adequate idea of such an extraordinary favor—such excessive liberality—such singular magnificence—such sublime benefits as the infinite love of God has here bestowed upon us? It has gone so far, that His omnipotence can go no further; for what can God Almighty give better or more excellent than Himself? What return of gratitude and love are not we bound to make for such unparalleled goodness? Is there any obedience we can give Him, which can bear the smallest proportion to what we owe Him? And shall we refuse that little which we can do? What shocking ingratitude would this be!

Venerable Bellarmine Beatified: Vatican Council

The last of the three Beatifications announced for this spring (says *America*) took place on May 13, when the Venerable Robert Bellarmine, of the Society of Jesus, was proclaimed Blessed. Cardinal Merry del Val pontificated at the ceremonies of Beatification which were carried out with unusual pomp. An unusually large number of Cardinals took part in the sacred functions, among them the two Jesuit Cardinals, Billot and Ehrle, Cardinals Vannutelli, Granito del Belmonte, Vico, Gasparri, Secretary of State to his Holiness, Bonzano, lately Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Van Rossum, Frühwirth, Scapinelli, and others. The Armenian Patriarch was also present and with him, a delegation of ecclesiastics and laymen from Bellarmine's archiepiscopal see of Capua, as well as the Bishop of Montepulciano, the diocese in which the new Blessed was born. With these there assisted representatives of the Bellarmine family on the paternal side, as well as of the Siennese Cervinis from which Bellarmine's mother, a sister of Pope Marcellus II., was descended. The General of the Jesuits, with his official family, was also present. At the afternoon ceremonies, when the Pope came down to the Basilica of St. Peter's to pray before the picture of the newly-beatified, the archdiocese of Capua was especially honored when the Archbishop of that See pontificated at Benediction.

It will be recalled that in his Christmas Encyclical, the Holy Father hinted that the sessions of the Vatican Council, interrupted in 1870, might be continued at some not distant date. He intimated also that there were many difficulties in the way. The hint given five months ago has, it now seems, eventuated in a rumor that the Pontiff intends to reconvoke the Vatican Council in the autumn of 1925, and that some 2200 bishops and prelates will be summoned from all parts of the world. It will be remembered that it will be just 1600 years since the first Ecumenical Council, that of Nice in Bithynia, assembled under Pope St. Sylvester.

Catholic Action

Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, assisted at the opening of the new headquarters provided in Rome for the Central Council of the "Italian Action and the Federation of Catholic Men." The Catholic Action and the Federation of Catholic Men has lately been extremely active, taking a strong and salutary initiative in every social, educational and religious movement that aims at the formation of an enlightened and zealous Catholic laity. In the ceremonies, the Cardinal was assisted by Mgr. Pizzardo and the President of the Catholic Action. After the ceremonies of the blessing of the building, and a discourse of welcome to the Cardinal from the President of the Catholic Action, the Secretary of State to his Holiness stated that the Sovereign Pontiff had the fullest confidence in those at present at the head of the Catholic Union, and declared that whatever their political preferences might be as citizens, as leaders of the Catholic Union they had no particular obligations to any one political party.